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CONTENTS.

GLASS MOSAICS OF BURMA,
BY HARRY L. TILLY.
WITH 13 ILLUSTRATIONS.

MODERN INDO-SARACENIC
(SANDEMAN HALL, QUETTA),
BY IVIE HAMILTON.
WITH PLAN AND 3 ILLUSTRATIONS.

INDEX TO VOL. I.
BY IVIE HAMILTON.

RAM SINGH DEL. MAYO SCHOOL OF ART LAHORE

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IRON WORK.

From Objects and Drawings in the South Kensington Museum.

In 28 Parts, price 28/-.

LIST OF PLATES.

ENGLISH.

Plate 1. Details of wrought iron Grille, known as the St. Swithin Grille, in Winchester Cathedral.

,, 2. Wrought iron Grille in the Chapel of St. Anselm, Canterbury Cathedral.

,, 3. Wrought iron Screen at entrance to Henry V.'s Chantry in Westminster Abbey.

,, 4. Details of wrought iron work in Canterbury Cath.

,, 5. Details of wrought iron work in Winchester Cath.

,, 6. Wrought iron Screen from St. John's Church, Frome, Somersetshire.

,, 7. Wrought iron Panel and Gate in Winchester Cath.

,, 8. Wrought iron Screen in the Chapel of University College, Oxford.
Wrought iron Altar Rail in St. Philip's Church, Birmingham.
Wrought iron Bracket in Denyer Street, Chelsea.

,, 9. Wrought iron Balusters.

,, 10. Pair of wrought iron Mace Stands.

,, 11. Steel Rim Lock, in pierced and engraved brass case.

,, 12. Steel Lock in pierced brass case.

,, 13. Steel Lock in pierced and engraved brass case.
Steel Key.

,, 14. Steel Hinge, covered with pierced and engraved brass.

FRENCH.

,, 15. Oak Coffer, decorated with wrought iron scrollwork.

,, 16. Wrought and stamped iron Hinge for a coffer.
Wrought and stamped iron Hinge.

,, 17. Wrought iron Knockers.

,, 18. Wrought iron Knockers.

,, 19. Wrought iron Lock

,, 20. Wrought iron Grille (*Guichet*).

,, 21. Two wrought iron Candelabra.

,, 22. Two wrought iron Candelabra.

,, 23. Engraved steel Lock and Key.

,, 24. Wrought iron Door, painted and gilt.

,, 25. Two wrought iron Panels.

,, 26. Wrought iron Bracket.

FLEMISH.

Plate 27. Wrought iron Balcony.

GERMAN.

,, 28. Wrought iron splayed Lock for a Coffer.

,, 29. Wrought iron splayed Lock for a Coffer.

,, 30. Wrought iron Lock and Hasp.
Wrought iron Door Handle.

,, 31. Wrought iron Lock and Hasp.
Wrought iron Door Handle.

,, 32. Wrought iron Door Handles.

,, 33. Wrought iron Door Hinges.

,, 34. Oak Window Shutter, with wrought iron mountings

,, 35. Wrought iron Lock and Key.

,, 36. Wrought iron Bracket with bell.

,, 37. Wrought iron Grating for a fanlight.

,, 38. Pair of wrought iron Gates.

,, 39. Wrought iron Bracket and Sign.

,, 40. Wrought iron Hook for a Candelabrum.
Wrought iron Candelabrum.

,, 41. Two Wrought iron Window Gratings.

,, 42. Wrought iron Window Grating.

,, 43. Wrought iron Coffer.

,, 44. Top of wrought iron Coffer.

,, 45. Wrought iron Bracket.

ITALIAN.

,, 46. Pair of wrought iron Gates.

,, 47. Two wrought iron Panels.
Wrought iron Grille.

,, 48. Wrought iron Bowl Stand.
Two wrought steel Bowl Stands.

,, 49. Wrought iron Panel.

,, 50. Pair of wrought iron Gates.

,, 51. Pair of wrought iron Gates.

SPANISH.

,, 52. Wrought iron Knockers.

,, 53. Wrought iron Knocker.

W. GRIGGS,

HANOVER STREET, PECKHAM,

LONDON, S.E.

The Journal of Indian Art and Industry.

GLASS MOSAICS OF BURMA.

By HARRY L. TILLY, Esq.

UNDER the Burmese Government the sumptuary laws were enforced against commoners not only in respect of dress, but in all the transactions of life, including even the words used in everyday speech. The honours thus accorded to the Royal family were shared by the community of monks, and as in many another country, the art handicrafts were matured in the Palace and the Monastery, where alone might the genius of the workman find unrestrained expression. The people, bound down as private persons, were, as patrons of the monks, able to indulge in the lavish display allowed to royalty alone, and while placing their earnings out of the reach of even official rapacity, were at the same time enabled to earn religious merit by obeying those precepts of the Lord Gaudama which inculcate the building of pagodas and monasteries, of shrines and of rest-houses in which to observe the eight-day fast.

And now the sumptuary laws have been swept away by the advent of the British, the old customs, strengthened by years of precedent, still hold sway, and with rare exceptions are observed by the people, who still refrain from using the once forbidden forms and materials for their private gratification.

The national characteristics of the Burmese are well expressed in the construction and decoration of their religious buildings. A laughter-loving nation, impulsive with quick genius, yet reverent where reverence is due, they love flowing lines and ornament exuberant with vitality, but are careful to form the framework of their structures on principles handed down from one master to another with all the authority of the past. And it is well that this should be so, for the old proportions are pleasing to the eye, and whether it be boat or pagoda, cart or shrine, each part is well placed and fitted for the work it has to do. If Burmese ornament be contrasted with that of a kindred nation, the Chinese, its peculiarities are made clear. Chinese work is orderly and restrained; the ornament is used to emphasize the construction, and the subdivision of the main divisions is carefully marked and is in good proportion. With the Burmans there is no restraint, and, except in the oldest examples, there are no plain spaces to rest the eye and the brain, nor is the wealth of intricate detail rendered clearer by the recurrence of intertwined patterns. The ornamental parts are attached after the structure is complete, and hide rather than explain the construction.

The general effect produced by the best examples is of beautiful outlines and elegant exterior proportions: but there enjoyment ceases; and the admiration, at first excited, is slowly changed to weariness at the disorganized jumble of items, each good in itself, but with no relation to its neighbour, and but little to the work as a whole.

It is curious, therefore, to notice how these characteristics of Burmese art are modified and changed when the handicraftsman has to deal with mosaics in which spaces, lines and patterns cannot be ignored. It is not an art indigenous to Burma, but was introduced from Siam after an invasion of that country by Naungdawpaya, son of Alaungpaya, and to this day some of the best masters of the craft are Shans, whose colour sense is more highly developed than that of the Burman, and who have some of the instinct for the division of spaces which characterizes the Chinese.

It is on the platforms of the pagodas in Lower Burma that the best examples of Burmese art are found, and chiefly on that of the Shwe Dagôn Pagoda at Rangoon, where pious Buddhists have for centuries lavished their riches. This, the most important shrine in Burma, is approached between two grim dragons and up many flights of covered steps, at each side of which are displayed on stalls, candles, paper praying-flags, flowers, incense sticks, toys, masks, song-books, cheap jewellery, and many other things calculated to attract the attention of people from the jungles. The light, slanting between the pillars at the sides, reveals in softened hues the bright colours worn by the worshippers who pass silently with bare feet up and down, or pause at the stalls. When the topmost step has been reached, the last and most gorgeous flower-stall has been passed and the platform gained, the eye looks across the widened vista, but does not rest until it reaches the highest point of the tapering gilded mass which arises in seeming confusion from the platform below. After gazing awhile at the glittering *ti* fixed against the shifting clouds, the glance descends again towards the base and is attracted by candles in a dark shrine close at hand, from the gloom of which twinkle stars of light, many coloured, and flickering as the flames waver in the wind. These are reflections caught from glass mosaics on pillar and altar, on the image and on its throne, on the ceiling and on the wall.

There are four principal shrines at the base of the pagoda, each facing a cardinal point and all decorated with glass mosaics. Those to the north and west are more elaborate than that opposite the south entrance, but before examining them it will be well to consider the group of pagodas and shrines found in the south-east corner of the platform, which are represented in Plates 89, 90. The mast with a fluttering peacock at its head carries streamers on which are written extracts from the Law of Buddha. The mast itself is encrusted for its whole length with mosaics in regular patterns, relieved here and there, but in unexpected places, with dividing rings. To the right in Plate 89 is a pagoda of singularly ungraceful shape, but the upper portion is covered with looking-glass mosaic which causes it to flash like dull silver against the palms behind. In front of this pagoda is a shrine which is best seen in Plate 90; it is made of masonry, and the whole of the front portion is glass mosaic set in cement.

Another example not far off is shown in Plate 90. An alabaster image is seen seated on a throne adorned with glass mosaic, while the background of the recess is of the same material. The whole of the front of the shrine is similarly ornamented. The upper portion of the exterior work consists of bold and effective scrolls placed on a bed of narrow slips of plain looking-glass. White glass is also the chief material used in the foliage work where there are occasional leaves of purple, of green and of a dull orange. The background of the pillars is in dark green on which are crimson stars and purple ornaments.

Passing along the platform, the main shrine at the base of the pagoda facing east next attracts attention. Taken as a whole, it is perhaps the most perfect example of Burmese art in the province. The many-roofed spire tapers above; each gable and pinnacle is in just proportion, the dark carving standing out against the roof and relieved by the red and gold of gable end and walling, while all is supported on massive round posts, vermilion near the base and encrusted above with silvery glass mosaic. Plate 91 shows the lower part of this shrine and a few Shans from the jungle. Glass mosaic is also used on the screens between the pillars, which are singularly effective.

The shrine facing the north has been pulled down and a new one is being built. In the pillars the ground colour is dull green, while the stems of the tendrils are white and the leaves in purple and orange; the whole being interlaced with a purple geometrical pattern, while a gilded line outlines each colour. Plate 91 shows the shrine finished. Inside, next to the pagoda, is a recess of very old date in which is a figure of Gaudama thickly encrusted with gold leaf and before which candles are burning. Along a wall which is more forward than the recess, but railed off, a number of images are placed, some of brass and some of marble, and many clothed with a robe of yellow gauze. On the top of the rail is another row of candles and these can be seen in the plate. Before these are flowers in jars—amherstia, frangipani and cannæ; worshippers seated with upraised closed hands mutter fragments of the law in Pali. The pillars are all covered with mosaic above and gilded below, the work intertwining in three planes. The colours of the outer pillars have been described before; the inner have a ground-work of blue and the pattern, in a conventional scroll—almost geometrical, is in green with a few buds of glass diamonds surrounding a ruby. The narrow strips outlining each colour are gilded. Above all is the ceiling, which follows the slopes of the roof except in the centre. It is in large panels of looking-glass arranged in star-like facets, divided into concentric squares or ovals by a border of bluish-purple flower scroll work, the edges of which are lined with gold. These ceilings are broad in effect, being of many different slopes; the light on the glass is not uniform but varying, gleaming here and there; but from the darker portions points of flashing light appear. The gilded portions, too, appear sometimes brown, sometimes golden in colour. In the centre the ceiling is more elaborate, and is shown in Plate 92.

The star-shaped facet-work generally used for ceilings is shown in Plate 92. It has been employed here to cover the back wall of a shrine, and on it has been imposed the figure of a *galon* or winged man, holding a writhing chain of *nagas*. From this plate a faint idea may be gained of the effect of using glass mosaics on the frontlet and embroidered edges of the robe of a figure. Although the artist has not quite succeeded, there is much in this work which appeals to the imagination. The contrast between the placid image and the horrid snakes is heightened by the smoothness of the alabaster against the rough glass background and by the pure dead white of the image against the gleaming facet-work in which is reflected the trees outside and red and green light cast through a coloured window over a doorway facing the image.

Continuing round the platform from the north shrine to the westward, an old giant *padauk* tree is seen, and around its trunk are masonry recesses, recalling those on the face of the cliffs at Ywataung, in which sit images of Gaudama placed there by devotees long since dead. In front and blocking them from view, save where the spires taper away, are modern shrines of brick, some in the conical Burmese shape and some in the square style of the Shans. Plate 93 shows one corner of the group. The chief effect is that of gold picked out with vermilion, though in some the vermilion predominates, but all the lower portions are elaborately decorated in

glass mosaics. Behind the barred doorways the alabaster images sit on the usual glass throne, and behind, through the gloom, glimmering points of light suggest a glass background. It is curious to notice that, though the buildings are in shadow, the white jackets and coloured silks of the passers-by are reflected in waves of light, giving to the immovable buildings the appearance of movement and bringing to mind the rhythmic play of light on a diamond necklace. Plates 93 and 94 show some of these shrines in greater detail, with the monsters that guard the doors.

Some good examples of old mosaic work are shown in Plates 94 and 95. The altars or thrones seen in the former are simply effective in design and compare well with the unmeaning design shown in Plate 93, and is preferable to that on Plate 92. There is less handwork and more headwork in the old design, and the result is much more satisfactory as a work of art. To the right of Plate 94 is a stand for an impression of the footprint of Gaudama Buddha, wherein the symbols of all his previous existences are depicted. This, too, is an excellently quiet and appropriate piece of work.

The box surmounted by a small shrine, shown in Plate 95, is one of those used to keep manuscripts in, and came from a monastery in Upper Burma. The colours employed are dull green and lead colour, relieved here and there with a sober red. On the same plate is a view of a shrine, not quite finished, on the western face.

Material used in Glass Mosaic Work.

Glass.—(*a*) *Backed with quicksilver.* Glass plates of different colours are well cleaned and dried. Mercury is poured over a foil of an alloy of tin and lead and the foil placed at the back of the glass and, after being sprinkled with fine ash, is squeezed with a cloth roller until it is perfectly even and smooth. The foil is removed from the glass, which is kept flat for a day and upright for another day. A thin piece of paper is then pasted over the coating and the glass is ready for use. It is cut into the required shapes with a glazier's diamond. (*b*) Very thin glass is treated in the same way and is cut into small squares with a diamond; the corners of the squares are snipped off with scissors; the edges are left jagged unless required for fine work, when they are bevelled off on a stone-cutter's wheel. These small octagons are used in bordering and in making patterns. (*c*) Glass with a tin-foil back. (*d*) Imitation diamonds.

Varnishes and Resins.—(*a*) *Thit-si.* The best is obtained from the Shan States and costs ₨ 2-8-0 a viss. (*b*) *A-young-tin Thit-si.* The common quality made in Burma. (*c*) *Shan-si.* An oil extracted in the Shan States from sesamum.

Sundries.—(*a*) Vermilion, the Chinese kind. (*b*) Ashes of cow-dung and bones, finely sifted. (*c*) Saw-dust. (*d*) Paste made of glutinous rice.

Preliminary Preparations.

Putties.—(*a*) The putty used in coarse work is made of saw-dust mixed with *thit-si* and well pounded in a mortar. (*b*) Putty used in finer work is made by boiling *thit-si* and stirring it until it gives out a slight crackling sound, when it is sprinkled with water and allowed to cool. It is then thoroughly mixed with cow-dung ash and beaten on a block of wood with a stick, ashes being added until the right consistency is obtained. It must be used when fresh and before it hardens. This putty is formed into a long string about one-tenth of an inch in diameter and is slightly powdered with fine ash. Ornaments are made of it which are afterwards applied to the work with resinous glue (*thit-si*), or the putty is applied to the face of the work and patterns formed partly by the manner in which it is laid on, and partly by being moulded with a knife.

When ornaments are made in the workshops, the design is first engraved on slate over which fine ash has been sprinkled, and the ornament is moulded to the pattern and taken off to set.

Processes.

Preparation of the Surface.—Glass mosaic is generally affixed to the plaster of masonry. Coarse saw-dust putty is laid on the plaster until an even surface is obtained, when it is coated with *thit-si* and allowed to dry. The surface is then rubbed down with a smooth stone.

Drawing the Pattern.—A card-board stencil is prepared in the workshop, and all the different coloured glasses are cut to shape there. The pattern is then marked on the prepared surface with powdered chalk.

Fixing the Glass.—The glass, ready cut, is placed in a bamboo tray, and the workman picks them out, and putting some saw-dust putty on the back, presses the glass with his thumb into the required position; he is shown doing this in plate 91. He does this with one colour at the time until the pattern is complete. Cords of putty are now placed between each piece of glass and they are carefully cut and moulded with the knife so that the finished pattern may be accurate and in flowing lines. The whole work is then coated with *thit-si*, which is allowed to dry. The parts which are to be gilded (that is, the tracery of dividing lines) are painted with a coating of vermilion and Shan *thit-si*. When this is dry the glass surfaces are cleaned and the parts to be gilded are again painted with a very thin layer of *thit-si* and gold-leaf is applied.

MODERN INDO-SARACENIC

(SANDEMAN HALL, QUETTA).

By IVIE HAMILTON, Esq.

In Volume I. of the *Journal of Indian Art* it is said :—" More, perhaps, has been done by Colonel Jacob to prevent the degradation of Oriental architecture by a practical illustration of its beauties in modern buildings, than any other official." It is now proposed to give an illustration of one of Colonel Jacob's designs, which was erected at Quetta, the capital of Baluchistan.

Sir Robert Sandeman, the Agent to the Governor-General, was on a tour in Southern Baluchistan, when he contracted influenza and died at Las Bela on the 29th January, 1892. I was at Sibi when the sad news was received, and never shall I forget a stroll that afternoon through Sibi bazar with Major Temple, who was then Political Agent at Kalat. An Indian bazar is usually a mass of busy and lively humanity, resembling a swarm of bees, but the effect of the news was soon apparent. Instead of the free and rapid movement of individuals, there was a restraint pervading the atmosphere. Men walked about slowly and were congregated in groups, the usual sounds were hushed, and the people were reverently discussing in knots of twos and threes the great man's personality, and what changes the death would cause. Who would succeed to the helm? Would the body be brought to Quetta for burial, or would it be interred in the Jam's possessions? What would the Khan do? How would the Maris take the event? &c., &c. In an article in the *Calcutta Review* it was said :—" His death has removed the most conspicuous figure from the scene of border politics, for he was a Colossus with no compeer in his own line. A writer in the *Times* has described him 'as the peaceful conqueror of Baluchistan.' The territory he added to the State is as large as the German Empire, and when impartial Time 'gives to each the exact proportion due,' his name will be ranked with such illustrious names as John Lawrence and James Outram."

The Sandeman Hall was first used for any public ceremony at the Viceroy's Durbar on 12th April, 1900, during which the Hon. Mr. Barnes said :—" On 29th January, 1892, Sir Robert Sandeman died suddenly of pneumonia while on a tour in Las Bela. Shortly afterwards, the annual meetings or Jirgas of the Sirdars were held at the Sibi Fair, and in the course of these meetings the Baluch and Brahui Sirdars spontaneously resolved to erect a monument in memory of their late chief, and at a single meeting they subscribed over Rs.15,000 for the purpose. Their example was followed by the Khan of Kalat and others, and ultimately the private subscriptions rose to the sum of Rs.50,612, of which nearly Rs.9,000 were contributed by the merchants and townspeople of Quetta. It was resolved by the subscribers to utilise the money in building, in memory of Sir Robert, a Jirga Hall in Quetta, and in March, 1895, Sir James Browne commenced the present building. The design of the hall was obtained from Colonel Jacob, R.E., the well-known head of the Public Works Department in Jaipur, who with great kindness and liberality provided all the working plans free of expense. Nevertheless, the cost, as the building progressed, was found to largely exceed the estimate, and in the end we were compelled to appeal to the Government of India for help. The help asked for was generously given, and the building was at last completed in 1899, at a total cost, including the price of the site, of no less than Rs.116,305. The sum was made up as follows :—

Private subscriptions - - - - - -	Rs.50,612
Subscriptions from Local Funds - - -	34,251
Allotted from Provincial Revenues - - -	13,781
Allotted from Imperial Revenues - - -	17,661
Total	116,305

At the same time that the Sirdars were raising money for the building of the Hall, the European friends of Sir Robert Sandeman also started a subscription list with the object of perpetuating his memory in Quetta. A sum of Rs.14,674 was subscribed, the greater part of which was spent in placing a handsome east window in St. Mary's Church at Quetta, and in obtaining the admirable portrait of Sir Robert Sandeman by the Hon. John Collier, which hangs in the Quetta Residency. Out of the surplus which was left, it was decided, after consulting the Sirdars, to obtain a *replica* of Mr. Collier's picture, and to present it to this Hall. That is the picture which is now hanging before your Excellency.

" The construction of a building of this kind is altogether outside the ordinary experience of the Military Works Department, and we owe a debt of gratitude to the officers who were in charge of the work, for the intelligence and ability with which it has been completed. These were Captain McCormick, R.E., to whose skilful supervision the successful result is mainly due; and Major Leslie, R.E., who superintended the completion of the ornamental designs. Great credit is also due to Mistri Hurnam Singh and to the contractors, Messrs. Haroun Devichand & Co., who have performed their work in a most thorough and praiseworthy fashion."

The design of the ground plan is a simple division into six squares. The Jirga Hall, which is in the form of a cross, consists of the central square, with its four wings, formed from the middle squares on each side. The

corner squares are formed into eight rooms, four on the ground floor and four above, to be used for library, record, store rooms, &c. The four upper rooms have galleries from which a good view of the main hall can be obtained. The large dome is over the centre square. The details have been artistically and intelligently worked out, with a perfect balance and symmetry which is "as inherent a quality of the works of nature as of true art." Fergusson says :—"Beauty lies in the thoughtful appropriateness of design, and intellectual elegance of detail, . . . and the forms that are best are the most appropriate to the purposes to which they are applied." The large hall, consisting of the central space with its four wings, expresses not only its constructive exigencies, but is most appropriate for the purposes of a Durbar or of a Jirgah (tribal council). Externally the building forms a most graceful and impressive whole, the skilful employment of the dome, which is artistically the most beautiful form of roof and especially appropriate in the East, has aided the graceful effect. In white marble the edifice would have been a perfect gem, but the original idea of constructing it with stone procurable in the district had to be abandoned on account of cost, so that it is built of brick. With brick, the danger in severe winters is the tendency of mortar to allow leakage, so that it will require careful watching to protect the fine plaster work in the interior from damage. The plaster ornamentation of the hall was designed by the School of Art, Lahore, and carried out by Mistri Hurnam Singh, and the plaster ornament in three of the small upper rooms was designed by two lady residents at Quetta. Those in the north-eastern and north-western rooms were designed by Mrs. Egerton, and the patterns are bold and well executed. To support a circular roof, a hexagonal base is first obtained by gradually filling up the corners of the room from the dado upwards, and this surface space is ornamented in plaster; above this the wall is broken up into a sixteen-sided figure, and on this comes the circular frieze which supports the dome. In the north-eastern room the frieze and two corner spaces have a vine pattern, and the two remaining corners a pomegranate pattern. The frieze and two corners in the north-western room are of Indian corn designs, and the remaining two corners of wheat. The ornament in the south-eastern room was designed by Mrs. Atree, the frieze and two corners being of rose pattern, and the two remaining corners of lily. The south-western room has conventional plaster designs not suitable to the rest of the building. The frieze has a dot-and-string pattern, and there are shields with renaissance designs in the corners.

It is a pity that the plinth (only two feet) was not higher, as the superstructure is not suitably shown off by such a low base. In summer the large hall is delightfully cool, but the winters in Baluchistan are severe, and the hall is then practically useless, as no method of heating has been adopted. Entering the hall with its mosaic stone floor, is almost as chilly as entering an ice-house. There are, however, fireplaces in the four lower rooms, the chimneys being at each corner of the building, and terminating most suitably in small domes, so as to be in harmony with the rest of the design. The building has a charming effect when viewed from a small distance, but the surroundings do not contribute, but rather detract from any heightening effect. Its picturesqueness could be greatly enhanced by having a direct approach from Lytton Road. This approach should have a row of trees on each side, and the Sandeman Hall could then be viewed from the Lytton Road as appearing at the end of the avenue. Surely such a masterpiece deserves suitable and artistic treatment; and as the land belongs to Government, it is like the traditional loss for the want of a hap'orth of tar. It is said that when the late Sir James Browne wished this approach made, the prejudices of a local official, whose compound would have slightly suffered, prevented this public improvement; but it is not too late for the subject to be re-opened.

The ground immediately surrounding the building is laid out as an ornamental garden, which is enclosed by a low wall with an iron railing. The two chief entrances to the grounds are east and west, and on each side of these entrances are erections, like the sentry boxes with graceful little domes which surmount the battlements of old native fortresses.

To paraphrase Fergusson, it might be said that the building is not sublime like the great hall at Karnac, it has nothing so intellectual as the Parthenon, nor constructively imposing as a mediæval cathedral, but it is simply a delightful Oriental gem.

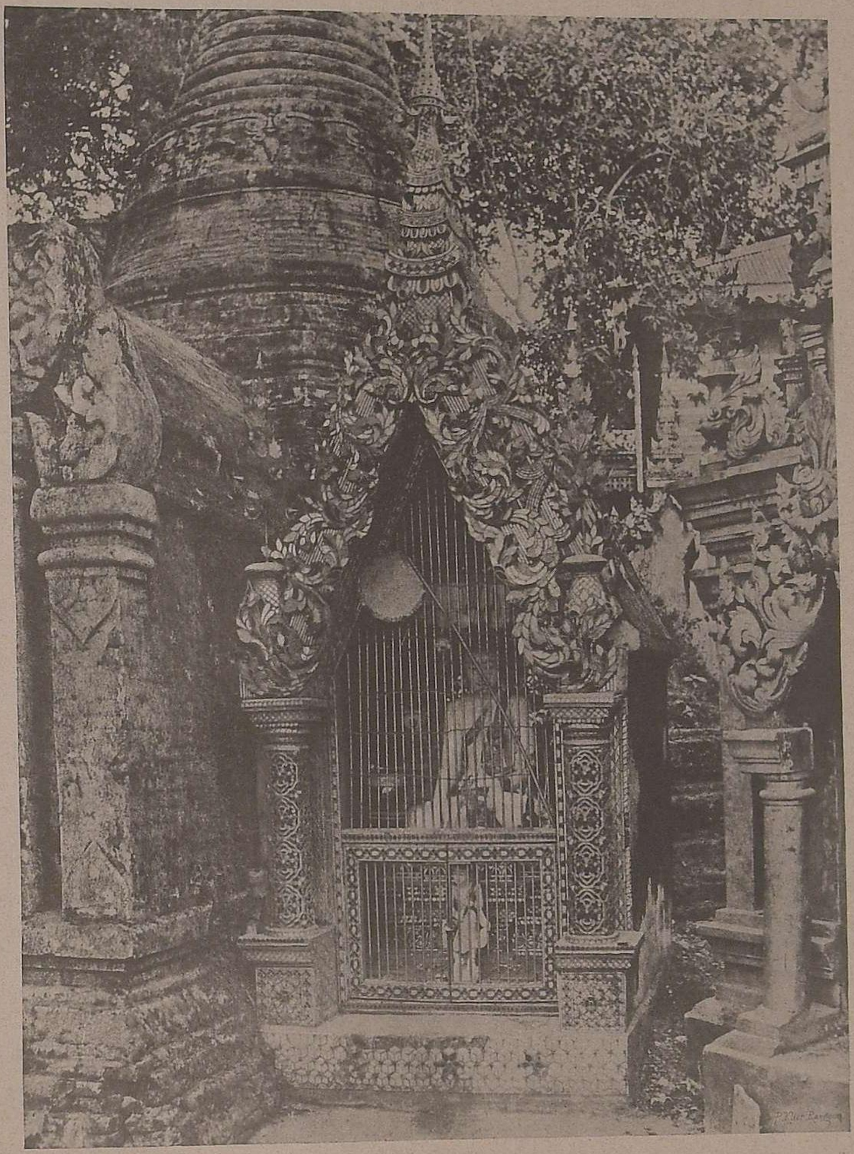
I am indebted to the courtesy of Colonel Glenny, R.E., Superintending Engineer, for the ground plan; and Mr. Bremner, the celebrated Quetta photographer, has kindly given permission to reproduce the three photographs of the hall.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

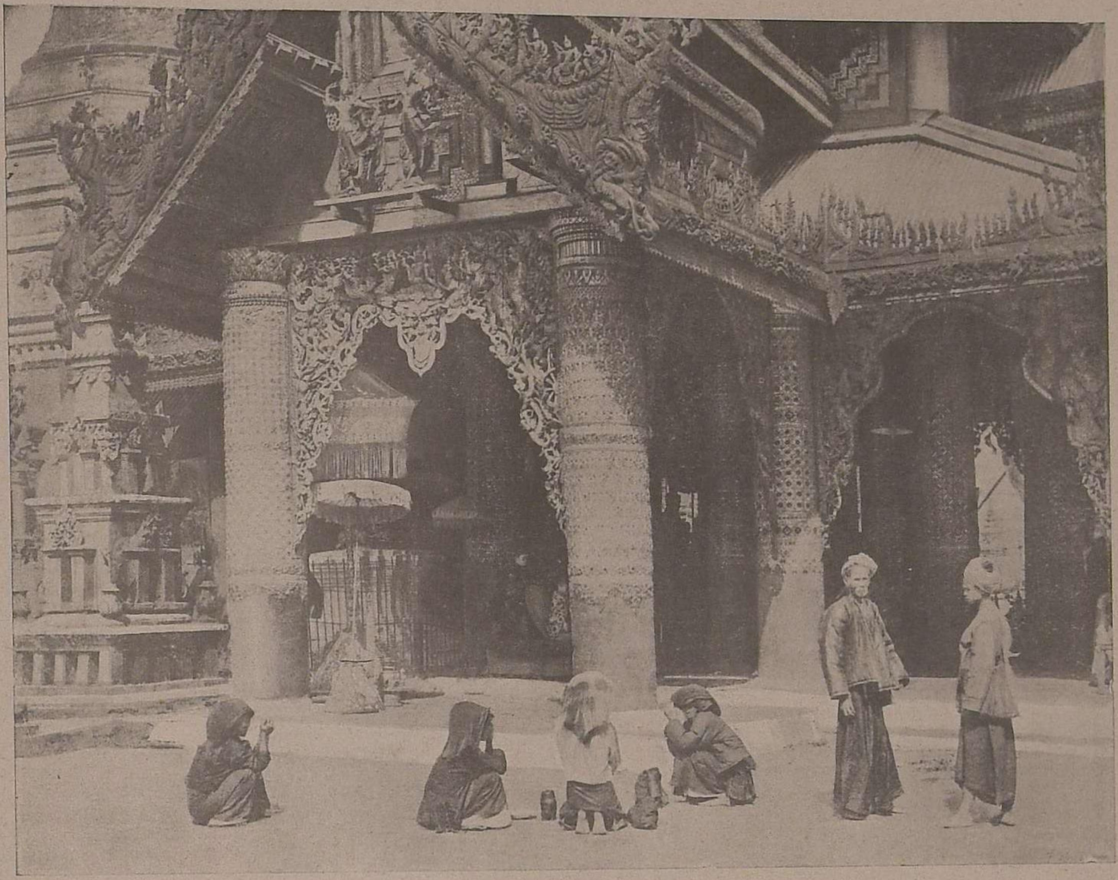
Glass Mosaics of Burma.—89. Group of Pagodas and Shrines in south-east corner of platform. 90. Shrines in south-east corner. 91. Base of main Shrine facing the east; Main Shrine facing the north. 92. Central portion of ceiling of northern Shrine; Detached Shrine in north-east corner. 93. Group of Pagodas at the base of old tree; Lower portion of a detached Shrine. 94. Details of Shrine shown in 93; Old Altars. 95. Old Box for holding manuscripts; Shrine on western face.

Modern Indo-Saracenic.—96. Ground Plan and View of Sandeman Hall, Quetta. 97. From the west entrance. 98. Interior.

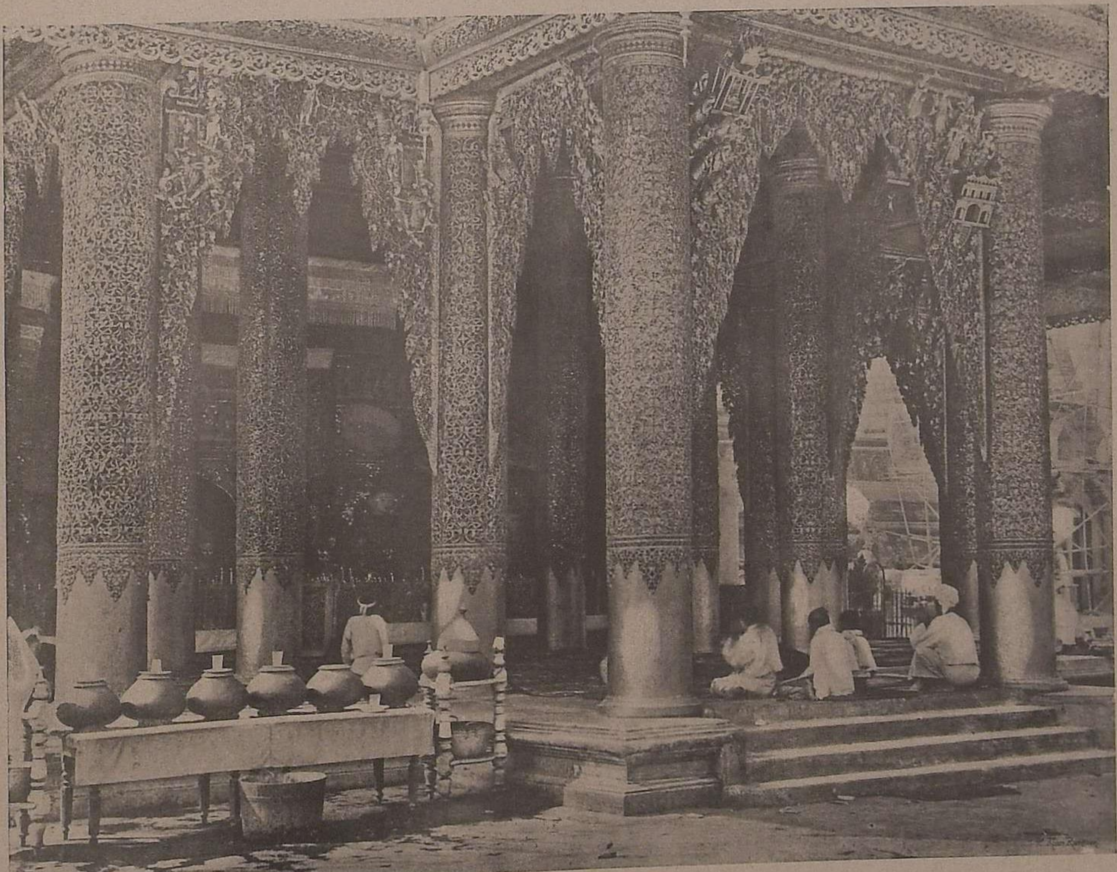
89.—Group of Pagodas and Shrines in south-east corner of Platform.



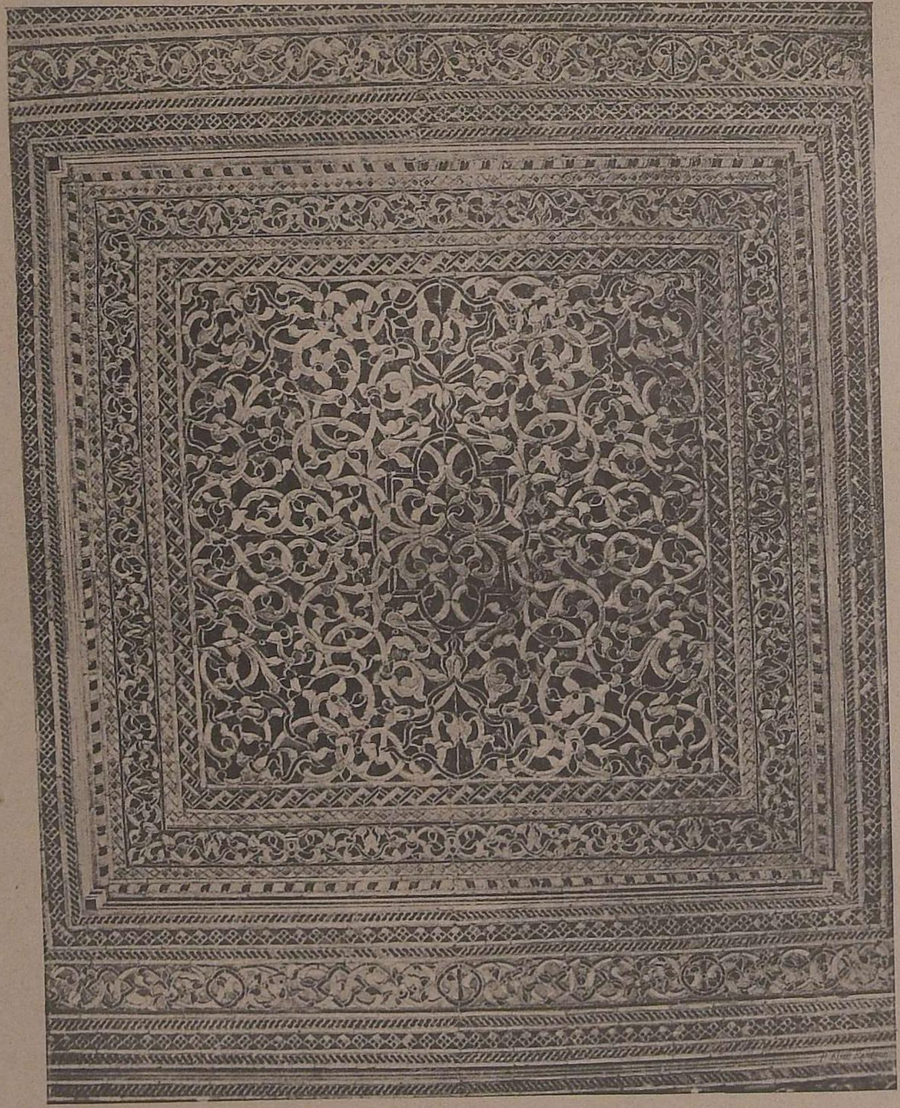
90.—SHRINES IN SOUTH EAST CORNER.



Base of Main Shrine facing the East.



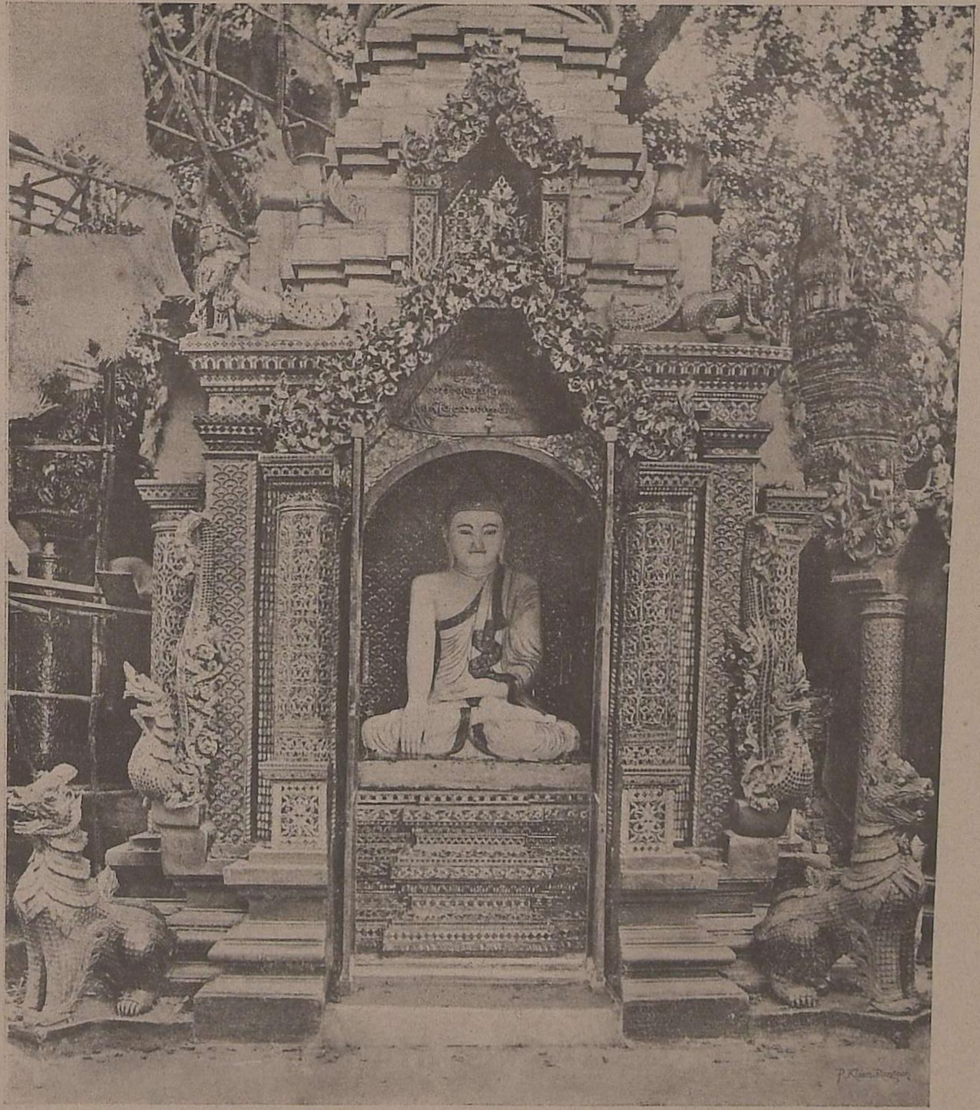
91.—Main Shrine facing the North.



92.—Central Portion of Ceiling of Northern Shrine.

Detached Shrine in north-east corner.

93.—Group of Pagodas at the base of old tree.



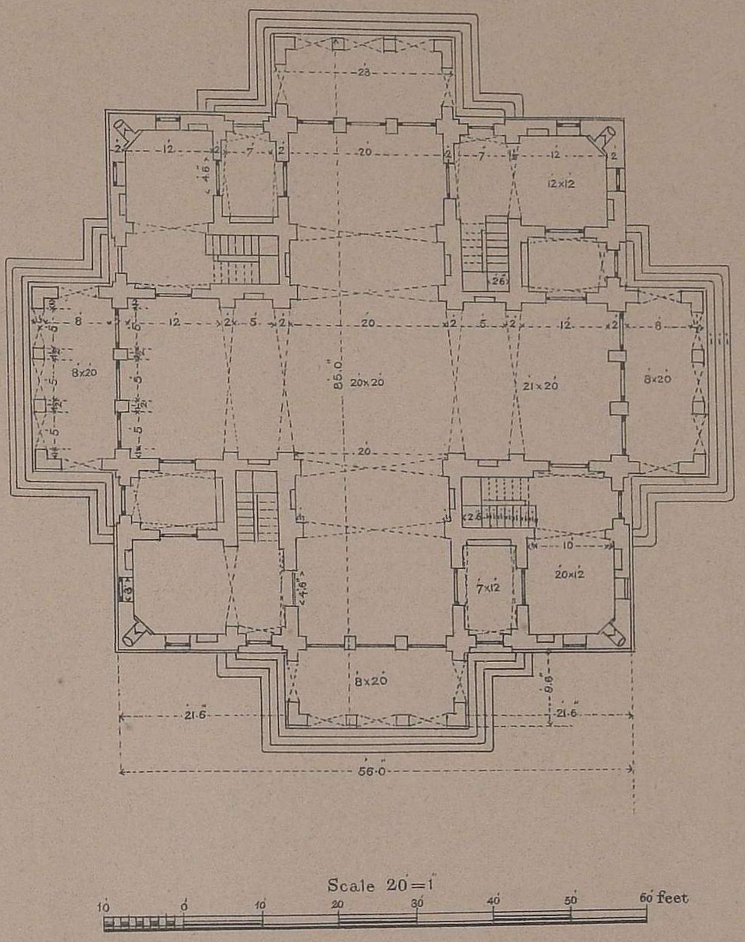
Lower portion of a detached Shrine.

94.—Details of Shrine shown in 93.

Old Altars.

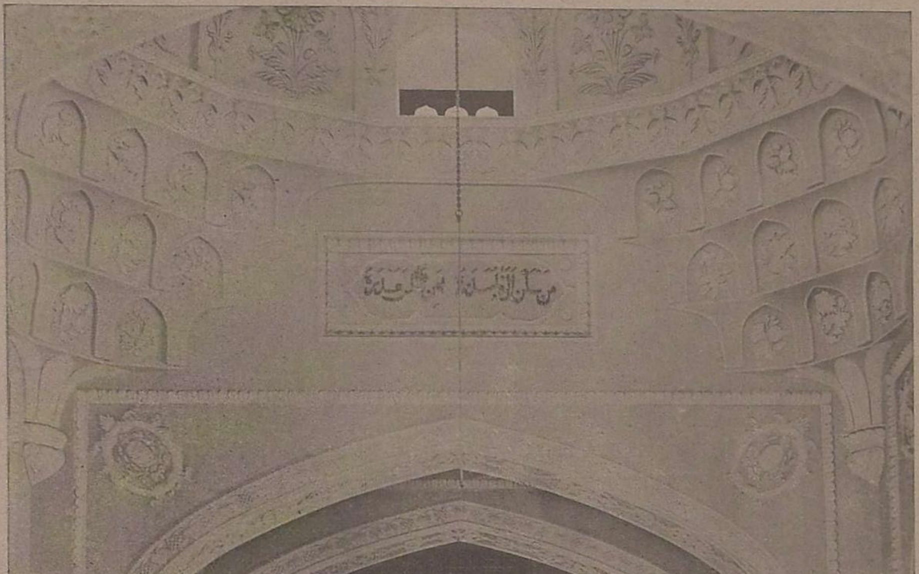
95.—Old Box for holding Manuscripts.

Shrine on Western face.



96.—Ground Plan and View of Sandeman Hall, Quetta.

97.—Sandeman Hall, from the West Entrance.



98.—Interior of Sandeman Hall.

INDEX

TO

VOLUME I.

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AND

INDUSTRY.

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IVIE HAMILTON.

INDEX.

A.

Abbotabad, 9
Abkhora, 2, 15, 41, 76-7
Abra, 104
Abu, 16, 110
Achamani, 3
Aftaba, 2, 76-3
Agate ware, 56-4, 61, 76-6, 81, 96
Agra, 16, 17, 18, 56-1, 56-2, 56-3, 56-4, 61, 76, 78, 95, 96
Fort, 16, 17, 95
Jail, 54
Ahmedabad, 3, 16, 17, 54, 82, 83, 117, 118, 121, 128
Wood Carving Co., 17
Ahmed Alli, 108
Ajanta cave paintings, 54, 55, 80, 99
Ajmere, 16, 18
Jail, 54
screen, 87
Akbari, 30, 101
Akshas, 49
Ala, 32
Algerian arts, 111
Aliara, 19
Aligarh, 56-2, 56-3, 56-4
Alla Yar, 104
Alms dish, 1
Amar Singh, 10
Ambala, 57, 104
Amba Singh, 10
Amber, 17
Amitabha, 113
Amritsar, 4, 5, 7, 8, 31, 47, 50, 52, 76-1, 76-2, 76-3, 76-4, 76-5, 76-6, 76-7, 101, 107, 118, 120
Amroha, 56-3, 56-4
Ananda Hari Karmakar, 97
Anand-lahari, 68-2
Angustri, 53
Anklet, 11, 26, 56-2, 68-2, 126, 131
Ansuk, 53
Antwerp Exhibition, 54
Appliqué, 32, 76-8, 102
Arab designs, 120
Arabesque carvings, 17, 61, 96, 111, 112
plaster, 92-2
pointed, 94
Sikh, brass, 4
Arabic architecture, 101
Areca nuts, 68-4
Archæology of India, 84
Arch, pointed, 16
Architecture, Arabic, 101
Bengal, 93
Buddhist, 88, 110, 111
Burma, 79
Dravadian, 103
Indian, 21, 57
Indo-Aryan or Brahmanic, 110
Indo-Saracenic, Pathan, 103, 105
Moghal, 101, 103
Jain, 16, 110, 111
Newar, 95
Arcot, North, 53, 107, 108
Argha, 3
Armlet, 11, 26, 50, 56-2
Armour, 56-3, 76-3, 76-4, 92-3
Arms, 56-3, 68-3, 76-3, 76-4, 92-3, 105, 126
Arsi, 5
Arti, 3, 4
Assam, 117
embroidery, 117
screen, 78, 102
silk, 78, 117
Assyrian influence, 111
Atpur, 68-2
Atrdán, 14, 56-2
Aurangabad, 103
Avalokitesvara, 113
Axes, 126
Azamgarh, 56-4, 118
Azimganj, 68-4
Azimgarh, 117

B.

Baba Atal, 4
Babul work, 6, 76-3
Baden-Powell (B. H.), 37
Bagrir, 129
Bahadurpur, 76-4
Bahawalpur, 9, 12, 25, 76-3, 76-4, 76-5, 76-7
mokhabbas, 2, 3
Baili, 5
Bakarol, 130
Bakhtawar, 17
Balai, 19, 20
Baldeo, 14
Baldeogarh, 18, 92-4
Balmati, 68-2
Baltoa, 2
Bamboo, 76-8, 78, 79, 102
Banda agates, 56-4
Bandana work, 112, 117, 119, 122
Bangles, 4, 11, 49, 50, 68-4, 76-7, 106, 126
Bankura, 68-4
Banpas, 68-3
Bansera, 19
Bansheri, 68-3
Bansi, 55, 68-2, 76-2
Banya, 68-2
Bara Banki, 56-4
Bareilly, 56-3
Baroda, 81, 117, 128, 131, 132
H.H. the Gaekwar, 126, 127
Court, 70, 126, 128
pigeon house, 80, 126, 128
Baroli, 16
Bartanas, 52
Baskets, 76-8
bamboo, 76-8
cane, 76-8
palm leaf, 76-8
straw, 76-8
Bas-reliefs, 16, 17
Bassi, 18, 92-4
Bassi Ghulam Hussain, 101
Bataks, 92-4
Batala, 31, 76-2
Bathara, 19
Bazaar Ramble, 26
Beads, 92-2
Bed-legs, lacquer, 47
Bedsteads, folding, 56-3
Begging bowl, 1
Behala, 68-2
Bells, 4, 121
brass, 4, 92-3
silver, 15
Bel tree, 121
Belts, leather, 76-8
silver, 107
Benares, 9, 28, 56-1, 56-2, 56-3, 56-4, 72, 117
brass work, 56-2
sacred cloth, 121
sacred ribbon hand-loom, 119
toys, 45
Bengal architecture, 93
court, 93
industries, 68-1
style, 93
Berhampur, 117
Besnagar, 110
Betel-nut carving, 92-3
Bhairūn Singh, 10
Bhairun, 14
Bhandi, 76-7
Bharput, 88, 110
Bhartpur, 16, 18, 88
Bhartya, 6
Bhav-ka, 2
Bhavnagar, 80, 81, 82
Bhensrana, 96
Bhera, 30, 38, 63, 76-2, 76-4, 76-5, 76-6
Bhudder, 17
Bhusaneswar, 93
Biana, 18
Bidar, 41, 98
Bidri ware, 41, 56-2, 68-3, 98, 103
Zarbuland, 43, 98
Bijapur, 118
Bijnor, 56-3, 56-4
Bikanir, 15, 16, 18
screen, 87
Bilaspur, 76-8
Bilezik, 53
Billimoria, 131
Biloch women, 32
Bini, 30, 76-2, 80
Birbhum, 68-4
Birdwood (Sir George), 61
Birch, 95
Bishan Ram, 17
Bishnupur, 68-2
Bison horn, 126
Blackwood, 80, 83, 128
Blood stone, 81, 96
Bokhara prints, 107
Bombay, 52, 68-3, 81, 99, 117, 131
blackwood, 54, 80, 83
court, 78, 80, 81, 82
exhibits, 79
inlaid work, 81, 131
pottery, 80
School of Art, 25, 80, 82
Bottles, glass, 27
Bourgoin (M. J.), 31
Bows, 126
Boxes, wooden, nests of, 56-4
small brass, 4
Sind, 45
Bracelets, 13, 26, 56-2, 68-4, 92-2, 92-4, 131
Brahmanism, 110
Brahmins, 121
Brass images, 56-3, 108
panels, 4
work, 56-2, 68-3, 76-3, 83, 90, 103, 107, 108, 132
Benares, 56-2
Punjab and Kashmir, 1
worker, 2
Bricks, ornamental, 68-2
Brick temple, 104
Brocades, 92, 117, 118, 120
Brocatelle, 118
Brooches, 107
Budaun, 56-4
Buddhism, 110
Buddhist sculptures, 88, 127
Buddhistic silk cloth, 118
Buffalo horn, 68-4, 92-4
Bukhari, 32
Bulandshahr, 23, 24, 56-3, 95
Bullan Beg, 44
Bungalow, 59
Bunshiram, 92
Buraks, 104
Burdwan, 68-1, 68-4
Burmese ornament, 52, 102
regalia, 127
screen, 78, 102

Burmese silver work, 69
Busts, plaster, 81

C.

Cabul Khador, 104
Calcutta, 68-1, 68-2, 68-3
Calico printing, 104, 107, 108, 128
Cambay, 117
 stones, 81
Cane, 78, 102
 panels, 102
Card boxes, 107
 cases, ivory, 52
Cards, lacquer, 108
 leather, 92-3
 wooden, 56-4
Carnac (Mrs. M. Rivett-), 26, 72
Carpets, camel's hair, 92
 cotton, 54, 66, 83, 103
 tapestry work, Farukhabad, 92
 floor cloths, 104
 woollen, 54, 83
 silk pile, 103
 tapestry, Lucknow Jail, 54
Carriage, silver state, 126
Carving—
 (wood), 24, 77
 Akbari, 30, 101
 Aligarh, 56-2
 Bulandshahr, 95
 Dabhoi (Gujarat), 128
 Delhi, 31
 Farukhabad, 95
 Gujarat, 80, 127
 Hyderabad (Deccan), 103
 Lahore, 30, 101
 Lucknow, 95
 Mainpuri, 95
 Mysore, 103
 Punjab, 29, 105
 Pattan (Baroda), 128
 pigeon-house, Baroda, 80, 128
 Pinjra work, 30, 31, 101, 102
 Saharanpur, 56-2
 Ujjain, 89
 (blackwood), Bombay, 54, 80
 Gujarat, 128
 (birch), Nepal, 95
 (deodar), Bhera (Shahpur), 30, 76-2
 Kashmir, 102
 Lahore, 101
 Punjab, 105
 (ebony), Bijnor, 29, 56-3, 56-4
 Delhi, 76-6
 Monghyr, 68-4
 (sandalwood), Baroda, 126
 Delhi, 76-6
 Gujarat, 29
 Kanara, 107
 Mysore, 107
 (shishan), Aligarh, 56-3
 Amritsar, 31, 76-2
 Bareilly, 56-3
 Batala, 31, 76-2
 Bombay, 83
 Bulandshahr, 56-3
 Chiniot (Jhang), 31, 76-2
 Farukhabad, 56-3
 Jeypore, 87
 Kotah, 87
 Nepal, 95
 Punjab, 105
 Udoki (Amritsar), 101
 (teak), Bombay, 82
 Burma, 102
 Gujarat, 128
 Jeypore, 92-2
 Jodhpur, 88
 Madras, 103

Carving (*contd.*)—
 (teak), Nagpur, 102
 (walnut), Simla, 76-5
 (white soft wood), Budaun, 56-4
 Saharanpur, 56-4
 (betelnut), 92-3
 (cocoanut), 108
 (slate), 68-2
 (ivory), 49
 Amritsar, 52, 76-6
 Bombay, 52
 Darbhanga, 68-4
 Delhi, 52, 76-6
 Lahore, 52, 76-6
 Madras, 52
 Moulmein, 52
 Multan, 76-6
 Murshedabad, 52, 68-4
 North Arcot, 52
 Patiala, 76-6
 Punjab, 52
 Rangoon, 52
 Shahpur (Sahiwal), 76-6
 Tanjore, 107
 Travancore, 51, 107
 Udaipur, 52
 Vizagapatam, 51, 107
 (stone), 16, 110
 Agra, 18, 95, 96
 Ahmedabad, 16
 Bhartpur, 88
 Bhavnagar, 80
 Bikanir, 18
 Cambay, 81
 Cutch, 81
 Dausa, 18
 Delhi, 76-7
 Dharangadhra, 81
 Gaya, 68-1
 Gwalior, 89, 109, 110
 jali (tracery), 18, 56-2, 88, 92-1, 96
 Jeypore, 17, 18, 92-1, 92-4
 Jodhpur, 18
 Karauli, 88
 Lahore, 76-7
 Muttra, 95
 Rajputana, 16, 92-1, 92-2, 110
 Rewa Kantha, 81
 Ujjain, 89
 Ulwar, 88
Cawnpore Memorial Church, 17
Ceiling work, Punjab, lacquer, 47
Central Asian Art, 76
Central India screen, 78, 88
Central Provinces peasantry, 4
Chabrah, 14
Chagun, 76-3
Chahdani, 2
Chain mail, 56-3
Chainna Veerauna, 107
Chakra, 121
Chambu, 72, 76-2
Champavati, 16
Chanda Singh, 101
Chandau, 107
Chanderi silks, 110
Chandernagore, 68-2
Chandi-mandas, 68-2
Chandra, 73
Chank, 121
Chaplis, 76-7
Charanamriti, 3
Charma, 2
Chartar, 35
Chased copper ware, Kashmere, 8
Chasing, 6, 8
 on tinned copper, 8, 76-3
Chatera, 6, 76-4

Chatri, 52
Chaujuk, 53
Chaunki, 31
Chauri, 11, 53
Chess boards, 107
Chessmen, 52, 68-4, 76-6, 92-4
Chetmohar, 68-4
Chhidrios, 128, 129
Chikara, 55
Chilamchi, 76-3
Chilums, 132
Chimba, 104
Chinaibar, 49
Chinese porcelain, 1
Chiniot, 5, 31, 76-2, 76-6 76-7
Chintzes, 130
Chipi, 104, 129
Chirawa, 92-2, 92-3
Chitera, 10, 17, 18, 92-2
Chitore, 16
Chittagong, 68-4
Chittagong Hill Tribes, 48
Chobs, 15, 86
Choli, 32
Chunian, 76-8
Churibar, 49
Churis, 26, 49, 50, 76-6, 92-4
Churu, 32
Chūski, 14
Clay figures, Krishnagar, 68-1
 Lucknow, 56-2
 Poona, 81
 fruit, Delhi, 76-1
 Gokak, 80
 Lucknow, 56-2
 models, Burdwan, 68-1
 Dacca, 68-1
 Datan, 68-1
 Delhi, 76-1
 Hatwa, 68-1
 Jeypore, 92-1
 Mozaffarpore, 68-1
Cobalt, 10
Cobra Vasuki, 121
Cocoanut, 3, 108
 carved, 108
Coco de mer, 1
Comb, 50, 51, 52, 68-4, 76-6
Conch shells, 68-2, 76-2, 81, 121
Coorg screen, 103
Copper work, 56-2, 68-3, 76-3, 82, 107, 132
 Punjab and Kashmere, 1, 25
 hammered, 82
Coppersmith, 2, 6
Carnelian, 81, 96
 ware, 56-4, 76-6
Cotton prints, 104, 107, 108, 128
Cowries, ornamentation with, 32
Creeper design, 121
Cretosa work (see Inlaying on wood)
Cuddapah, 107, 108
Cutch, 9, 80, 81, 117, 118
Cutlery, 56-3, 68-3, 76-5
Cuttack, 68-3, 68-4
Cyclopædia of India, 62
Cypress tree, 127

D.

Dabba, 2
Dabhoi, 128, 130, 132
Dacca, 68-1, 68-2, 68-3, 68-4, 97, 117
Dadoes, cotton printed, 104
Daggers, 56-3, 76-3, 126
Dalpat Nathu, 82
Damascening—
 wire on iron or steel (*Kuft*)
 Gujarat, 76-3
 Jeypore, 92-3
 Sialkot, 76-3, 105

Damascening (*contd.*)—
gold and silver on alloy (*bidri*), 41, 98
Bidar, 41, 98, 103
Lucknow, 41, 56-2, 98
Murshedabad, 41, 68-3, 98
Purneah, 41, 68-3, 98
(Zarbuland) Lucknow, 43, 98
Damru, 121
Dank, 13
Daos, 68-3
Darbhanga, 68-1, 68-2, 68-3, 68-4
Das Avatar, 72
Daska, 7, 76-4
Datan, 68-1
Dausa, 18
Dawakha, 32
Decorative art, 56-1, 68-2
Decorative panels, Ulwar, 91
Decoration, metal, 6
Deer skins, 76-8
Deg, 2
Degcha, degchi, 2, 76-4
Delhi, 4, 9, 10, 16, 17, 18, 25, 31, 47, 50, 52, 68-1, 76-1, 76-2, 76-3, 76-4, 76-5, 76-6, 76-7, 76-8, 106, 107, 117, 118, 120
architecture, 88
fort, 16, 84
porcelain, 76-7
Deoband, 56-4
Deodar, 30, 76-2, 101, 102, 105
Dera (Jeypore), 19
Dera Ismail Khan, 32, 50, 76-6, 106
Derajat, 32
Dewah, 56-4
Dewálgirs, 104
Dewalwara, 16
Dhák, 68-2
Dhaunadal, 17
Dhol, 68-2, 76-2
Dholak, 68-2
Dholki, 76-2
Dhotis, 126, 130
Dhrangadhra, 81, 117
Dhuppatti, 122
Diaper, 120
Dibbya, 2
Dictionary of Islam, 67
Difficulties of art manufactures, 37
Dinajpur, 68-2, 68-3
Dipmáls, 24
Dish mats, 108
leather, 108
Divmálas, 24
Dols, 76-5
Dorje, 4
Doutár, 35
Dravidian architecture, 103
Drawings, 56-1, 68-1
Dumraon, 68-4
Dungarpore, 18, 92-4
Durga, 73, 92-1
Dyeing, 118
Bandana, 122
net, 121
patolo, 120

E.

Earthen vessels, 76-4
Earthenware (see Pottery)
glazed, Peshawar frontier, 1
East India Art Manufacturing Co., 80, 87
Ebony, 29, 56-3, 56-4, 68-4, 82, 108
boxes, 76-6
Ekka, 5, 32
Ektárá, 68-2, 76-2
Embossing, 6
Embroidery—
Assam, 117

Embroidery (*contd.*)—
Dacca, 117
Madras, 108
Punjab, 107, 118
appliqué, 32, 76-8, 102
gold and silver on velvet, Baroda, 126
Delhi, 107
Rajputana, 91
Kalaga, Burma, 69, 102
Karchob or frame embroidery, 91
leather, on leather, Bilaspur, 76-8
gold and silver, Punjab, 76-7
with silk, Derajat, 76-8
Hoshiarpur, 76-8
Peshawar, 76-8
phulcari, Amritsar, 120
Delhi, 120
shishdari phulkari, gloss silk upon cotton, Lahore, 47
silk, Baroda, 126
sozni, Peshawar, 119
white silk on net, Delhi, 120
with a silken floss or thread, 117
Enamel—
Champlevé, Bhawalpur, 25, 76-3
Benares, 9
Delhi, 9, 25, 76-3
Hazara, 76-3
Jeypore, 9, 25, 40, 91, 92-2
Kangra, 9, 76-3
Kashmir, 8, 9, 25
Lucknow, 9
Multan, 9, 25, 76-3
quasi enamel, Partabgarh (Rajputana), 9, 13
Rutlam, 9, 13
Enamelled copper ware, Kashmir, 8, 76-5
Encaustic tiles, 38
Engraving—
intaglio, silver, Bikanir, 15
Burmese, 69
Delhi, 76-3
Jeypore, 14, 15, 92-3
Kashmir, 8
Lucknow, 56-2
Rampur, 56-2
by Nand Kishore, 14, 92-3
brass, School of Art, Jeypore, 90
relief, silver, Burmese, 69
Delhi, 76-3
Jeypore, 15, 92-3
Kashmir, 8
Lucknow, 56-2
Rampur, 56-2
brass, Hyderabad (Deccan), 103
seals, Agra, 56-4
Lucknow, 56-4
Engravings, 6, 56-1, 68-1
Etao, 87
Etawah (Kotah), 19
Exhibition, Antwerp, 54
1871, 7
1886, 48
Indian and Colonial, 40, 48, 63, 77, 86, 93, 101
Jeypore, 39
Eye, evil, 58, 105, 118
Eyes (images), 12, 92-3

F.

Fabeck (Dr. D.), 17, 90
Fabrics, textile, 111
Façades, pierced, 16
Faience, 106
Fans, gold, 127
khaskhas, 126
palm leaf, 108
Farsi, hukká, 41

Farukhabad, 56-3, 92, 95
Fatehpur (N.W.P.), 56-3, 56-4
(Rajputana), 92-2
Fatehpur Sikri, 16, 17, 61, 95
Fateh Ram, 17
Ferozepore, 76-6, 106
Figure weaving, 118
Figures, grotesque, Pattan pottery, 132
Filigree work, 68-3, 76-3, 97
mandila, 97
Fire, Indian Museum, 56
Floor cloths, *jajims*, 104, 128, 130
Foot prints (Vishnu), 121
Framjee, Pestonjee, Bhumgara, 54, 107
Fresco painting, 76-1, 92-2
Furniture, 38
blackwood, shisham, Aligarh, 56-3
Bareilly, 56-3
Bombay, 54, 80, 83
Bulandshahr, 56-3
Farukhabad, 56-3
Gujrat, 76-5
Katarpur, 76-6
Saharanpur, 56-3
ebony, Bijnor, 56-3
Monghyr, 68-4
toon, Katarpur, 76-6
walnut, Simla, 76-5
East India Art Manufacturing Co., 80
Mayo School of Art, 31
Sekhawati, 92-3
Furs, 76-7

G.

Gada, 121
Gágar, 2, 76-4, 76-5
Gandhára, 29
Ganesh, 22, 75, 89
Ganga, 72
Ganga-ságar, 2, 28, 76-4, 91
Ganga Ram, 17
Ganga Singh, 101
Ganjam, 108
Garnets, 19, 92-4
Garuda, 114
Garwa, garwi, 2
Gaur, 94
Gaya, 68-1, 68-4
Gazetteer, Thornton's, 100
Ghargros (petticoats), 130
Ghai Bhatta, 18
Ghanta, 4
Gharai, 10, 92-2
Gharki, 43
Gheesa Singh, 10
Ghorian, 25
Ghulam Husain Bassi, 76-6
Ghuma Singh, 10, 12
Gilt copper ware, Kashmir, 8
Glass ware, 56-4, 68-4, 76-7, 81, 88, 92-4
bottles, 27, 56-4
Gloves (prayer), 84
Gobind Ram, 17
Gokak, 80
Gokal, 10
Gold-beater's skin, paintings on, 92-1
Gold plate (see Plate)
Golden Temple, 4
Gonda, 56-4
Gondal, 80
Gopal Singh, 101
Gopi-jantra, 68-2
Gorakhpur, 56-3
Government Resolution (Museums and Exhibitions), preface 1
Graham (Mrs. Irving), 99
Gram plant, 75
Grande-roda, 35
Greek influence, 111

Griffiths (J.), 82, 99
Growse (F. S.), 21, 23
Gudha, 92-4
Gujar, 20
Gujrat, 76-3, 76-5
Gujranwala, 7, 76-4, 76-7
Guláb-dán, 127
Guláb-pásh, 2, 14, 76-3
Gupte (B. A.), 33, 126
Guptis, 76-4
Gurdaspur, 76-2
Gurguri, 3, 41
Guru Baba Nanak, 47
Guzarat, 29, 80, 126, 128
Gwalior, 89, 110, 124
Fort, 89

H.

Habibjoo, 8
Hajee Meah Jau, 92
Hall, pillared, 16
Halwai, 5
Hamilton (Dr. Buchanan), 42
Hamirpur, 56-2, 56-3
Harashnáth, 16, 17
Harilal Parshotana, 82
Hari Singh, 10
Har Sookh Singh, 10
Hatchets, 126
Hatwa, 68-1
Hazara, 76-3, 76-8
Helmets, 105
Hemchand, 92
Hendley (T. H.), 9, 39, 86, 91
Hindown, 18
Hindus, 1, 2, 107
Hindu style, 87, 88, 92-3, 93, 103
Hissar, 3, 76-4, 76-8
Horn work, 68-4, 92-4, 107
Hoshiarpur, 5, 38, 50, 76-2, 76-4, 76-6, 76-7, 76-8, 101, 106, 107
Hukka, 2, 13, 15, 41, 56-2, 68-3, 76-8, 92-3, 106, 131, 132.
Hukm Ram, 17
Husain Ali, 44
Husuk, 53
Hyderabad, Deccan, 47, 103, 113
screen, 78, 103
Sind, 9, 13, 80

I.

Idols, 3, 17, 18, 56-3, 68-1, 68-2, 92-3, 107, 108, 132
Idol, eyes, 12, 92-3
Ilambazar, 68-2, 68-4
Index of Arts and Industries, 56-1, 68-1, 76-1, 92-1
Indian Antiquary, 6
manufactures, 92
Museum, fire at, 56
palace, 79, 92, 105
pictures, Albert Hall, 99
Indo-Persian figure weaving, 118
Indore, 14, 59, 117
Inkstands, 4, 15, 107
Inlaying—
in wood, marquetry, 5
Cretosa work, shisham wood with ivory, Hoshiarpur (Punjab), 50, 76-6, 101
Kotah, 87
ebony inlaid with ivory, Mysore, 108
Monghyr, 68-4
ebony inlaid with horn, Monghyr, 68-4
Tarsia work of Bombay, *pique*, sandalwood inlaid with tin wire, ebony, brazil wood, ivory and stag's horn,
Billimoria (Baroda), 131
Bombay, 81, 131
Surat, 81, 131
sandalwood inlaid with ivory—
Vizagapatam, 51, 107
Inlaying (*contd.*)—
tarkashi, shisham wood with brass wire,
Mainpuri, 24, 56-3, 95
Pilibit, 56-3
shisham wood with brass inlay,
Chiniot (Jhang), 76-6
Hoshiarpur, 76-6
tortoise shell inlaid with ivory,
Vizagapatam, 107
horn inlaid with ivory,
Vizagapatam, 51, 107
horn with ivory and mother-of-pearl,
Etawah (Kotah State), 19
in metals (see Damascening)
in stone, mosaics, pietra dura, Agra, 56-4, 61, 76, 78, 95
incrustations of gold and jewels in jade, Delhi, 76-3
Islam, Dictionary of, 67
Islamabad, 68-3
Ivory basket work, 51
carving (see Carving)
inlaying (see Inlaying)
mat work, 68-4
paintings on, 56-1, 76-1, 92-1
toys, 50, 68-4, 76-6

J.

Jacob (Col.), 17, 39, 87, 92-1
Jacquemart (M. A.), 25
Jade, encrusted with gold, Delhi, 76-3
Jagadhri, 5, 7, 76-4
Jagan Nath, 13
Jagannathis, 76-4
Jagobandhu, 97
Jagonath, 74
Jails, Agra, 54, 92
Ajmere, 54
Lucknow, 54
Yerrowda, 54
Jain temples, 16
Jains, 18, 110, 127
Jajims (floor cloths), 104, 128, 130
Jalandhar, 38, 76-2, 76-3, 76-7
Jamsitji Nowroji, 54
Jandiala, 7, 76-4
Janki Prasad Lala, 22
Japanese lacquer, 45
Jasper, 96
ware, 56-4, 76-6
Jaunpur, 56-4
Jawahir Singh, 10
Jedana, 19
Jeven lall, 92
Jewelry, *babul* work, Delhi, 6, 76-3
Burmese, 127
diamond cut silver ornaments, Lucknow, 56-2
enamelled, Bhawalpur, 76-3
Delhi, 76-3
Jeypore, 11, 92-2
Jhang, 76-3
Kangra, 76-3
Lucknow, 56-2
Multan, 76-3
encrusted gold and jade, Delhi, 76-3
filigree, Cuttack, 68-3
Dacca, 68-3, 97
mandila, 97
gem-setting, Delhi, 106
mat pattern, Delhi, 76-3
miniatures, Delhi, 76-3
round silver beads, Panipat, 76-3
swami, 107
Jeypore, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 40, 61, 68-1, 87, 92-1, 92-2, 92-3, 92-4
court, 86
enamels, 9, 25, 41, 91, 92-2
Jeypore Exhibition, 39
flag, 86
H.H. the Maharajah, 85
Pavilion, 86
School of Art, 17, 90, 92-4
Jeysulmere, 16, 18, 96
Jhajjar, 76-7
Jhali, 18, 56-2, 88, 92-1, 96
Jhanjharpur, 68-3
Jhang, 76-1, 76-2, 76-3, 76-5, 104
Jhansi, 28, 56-3
Jhelum, 118
Jhirin, 19
Jhirri, 18
Jhunjhmi, 92-2, 92-3
Jindra, 44
Jodhpur, 16, 18, 91
screen, 88
Jogis, 20
Journal of Indian Art and Industry, Preface, 3, 6
Jumboo, 3
Junagad, 82

K.

Kacha vina, 55
Kachh, 25
Kadi, 132
Kadirbuxsh, 92
Kaghazi pottery, 56-4, 76-7
Kairi, 11
Kajawa, 5
Kalaga (cloth hangings, Burma), 69, 102
Kalasi, 108
Kali, 121
Kalighat, 68-1
Kalis, 76-4
Kalpi, 28
Kālu, 14
Kamagri work, 76-2
Kamān, 76-2
Kanara, 107
Kanch, 26
Kanchannagar, 68-3
Kangra, 7, 9, 13, 76-1, 76-2, 76-3, 76-8
Kangri, 8, 76-5
Kanon-Kwanyin-Avalokitesvara, 113
Kanseras, 132
Kānsī, 2, 6, 68-2, 68-3
Kantanagar, 93
Kanun, 76-2
Kapadnanj, 81, 82
Kapadvanj, 36
Kapurthala, 76-1, 76-3
Karachi, 9
Karahis, 76-5
Karatal, 68-2
Karauli, 16, 18, 88
screen, 88
Karchol or frame embroidery, 91
Karmakar, 97
Karna-bidri, 43
Karnal, 5, 76-5, 76-7
Karnul, 107, 108
Karori, 14
Kasera, 6
Kashi work, 76-7
Kashigar, 65
Kashmir, 9, 76-2, 76-3, 76-5, 102
brass and copper work, 1, 5, 8, 25
decoration, 8
screen, 101
Katarpur, 76-6
Kathiawar, 117
Katora, 2, 76-4
Kaub, 2, 76-4
Keith (Major J. B.), 110
Kekri, 19
Keonjhar, 68-3

Kesurga, 53
Khajuraho, 123, 124
Khankra, 68-3
Kharádi, 76-6
Kharita, bag, 120
Khatri, 129
Khaujri, 76-2
Khema Rám, 13
Khemcha, 2
Khitai, or Chinese porcelain, 1
Khujas, 132
Khurja, 22, 23, 56-4
Khus-khus, 27, 126
Kibitkas, 53
Kiblanamá, 14
King, 76-2
Kinkhab, 47, 82, 117, 118, 120, 121, 131
Kipling (J. L.), 1, 21, 29, 32, 44, 49, 65, 69, 76-1, 104
Kirpa Singh, 101
Kishangarh, 19
Kishan Singh, 10, 11
Kishti, 44
Kochera, 19
Kohat, 76-4, 76-7
Koli, 20
Kotah screen, 87
Kothi, 32
Kot Kamalia, 104
Kotli Loharan, 76-3
Krishna, 73, 92-1
Krishna Chandra Karmokar, 97
Krishnagar, 68-1
Krishnaswans Naida, 99
Kuft work, 56-2, 76-3, 92-3, 106
Kulu, 9, 13
Kumhar, 65, 68-1
Kunj, 25

L.

Lac bracelets, 26
  cloths, Peshawar, 76-1
  turnery, 47
    Agra, 56-3
    Bareilly, 56-3
    Benares, 56-4
    Darbhanga, 68-2
    Delhi, 106
    Dera Ismail Khan, 32, 50, 76-6, 106
    Fatehpur, 56-3, 56-4
    Ferozepore, 76-6, 106
    Hoshiarpur, 76-6, 106
    Ilambazar (Birbhum), 68-4
    Jeypore, 92-3, 92-4
    Bhandala, 92-3
    Lucknow, 56-3
    Mirzapur, 56-4
    Pakpattan, 76-6
    Patna, 68-2
    Sahiwal (Shahpur), 76-6
    Sankheda, 133
    Sasseram, 68-2
    Shahjehanpur, 56-3
    Sind, 47
Lacquer, 45
  brass, Kashmir, 8
  Hyderabad (Deccan), 47, 113
  Nossam, 108
  Rajput shields, 47
  Shahpur (Rajputana), 47
Lace, needle-point, 108
  gold and silver, 127
Lachhman, 17
Lachhman Das, 13
Lachmangarh, 92-2
Lacquered shields, 47
Lahore, 5, 9, 10, 30, 47, 52, 76-1, 76-2, 76-3, 76-4, 76-5, 76-6, 76-7, 76-8, 101, 118
Lahore Museum, 6
Lālak, 14
Lala Kasinath, 15
Lalitpur, 56-3
Lalsat, 92-4
Lamps, 5, 27, 56-3, 92-3, 108, 121, 126
Lances, 126
Lapidaries' work, 56-4, 68-4, 76-6, 92-4
Lapis lazuli, 96
Lattice work, 30, 31, 101, 102
Lawapur, 68-3
Lawrence (W.), 47
Leather, 76-7, 76-8
  appliqué, Bilaspur, 76-8
  dish mats, 108
  hukka, 3, 76-8
  ornamented with brass, 76-8
  playing-cards, 92-3
Lena Singh, 101
Liberty and Co., 55
Lihaf, 104
Limestones, nummulitic, 16, 18
Lingam, 18, 121
Lithographs, 56-1, 68-1
Local committee, functions of, Preface 5
Lota, 107, 112, 126, 131
Lotus, 73, 99, 103, 114, 121
  Tartar, 10
Lucknow, 9, 13, 41, 43, 56-1, 56-2, 56-3, 56-4, 95, 98
  Central Prison, 54
Ludhiana, 76-4
Lussoo, 8

M.

Madham, 76-2
Madio Prasad, 99
Madras, 52, 65, 118
  Presidency, art ware, 107
  School of Art, 108
  screen, 78, 103
Mahadeo, 73
Maharaja Man Sing, 9
Mahati vina, 55
Mahi maratib, 86
Mahomed Jan, 92
Mahomed Magdoom, 108
Mahomedan style, 30, 31, 94, 103, 120, 127
Mahomedans, 1, 2
Mainpuri, 24, 56-3, 95
Makrāna, 16, 17, 88, 92-4, 96
Malachite, 96
Manbhum, 68-4
Mandawar, 17, 56-4
Mandira, 68-2
Mandila, 97
Mandugarh, 17
Manihars, 10
Maple bowls, 1
Marble, black, 18, 88, 92-4, 96
  cream coloured, 18
  dark red, 18, 92-4
  green, 18, 92-4
  grey, 18
  pink, 18, 88
  salmon, 18
  statuary, 18, 88, 92-4
  white, 17, 18, 61, 88, 92-4, 96
  work, 4, 56-1, 56-4, 80, 81, 88, 92-4
  yellow, 96
Marquetry (see Inlaying in wood)
Martaban, 2, 76-7
Marwaris, 15, 86
Mashru, 86, 117, 126, 130, 131
Masks, 92-4
Masulipatam, 130
Mataya, 73
Matchlocks, 56-3, 68-3, 76-4
Mats, 76-8, 78, 102, 108
Mauj, 31
Mayuri, 55
Mayo School of Art, 18, 31
Mehdi Husain, 44
Meerut, 56-3
Memorial Church, Cawnpore, 17
Mendicant's bowl, 1
Metal work in brass, copper and tin—
  Casting, 1, 5, 56-2, 56-3, 68-3, 92-1, 92-3, 107, 108, 126, 132
  Engraving, 8, 76-3
    Benares, 56-2, 72
    Jeypore, 90
    Tanjore, 107
  Repoussé, Amritsar, 4, 8
    Baroda, 132
    Bombay School of Art, 82
    Hyderabad (Deccan), 103
    Jeypore, 92-3
    Kashmir, 8
    Tanjore, 107
  Encrusted, copper on brass, Tanjore, 107
    Tirupati, 108
    silver on brass, Tirupati, 108
    copper on silver, Tanjore, 107
    tin on copper, Amritsar, 8, 76-3
    Kashmir, 8, 76-3
    tin on brass, Moradabad, 2, 56-2, 96
  Niello, tinned, Kashmir, 8, 76-3
  Screens, panels and pierced work—
    Ahmedabad, 83
    Amritsar, 4
  Enamelled copper and brass—
    Bahawalpur, 76-5
    Delhi, 76-5
    Kashmir, 8, 76-5
Meywar, 19
Mica, 20, 92-2
Mihrab, 29, 101
Minakar, 10, 92-2
Minakari, 9
Minakshi Asari, 103
Minaret, 16
Miniatures, 76-1, 76-3, 89
Mina sarangi, 55
Mirzapur, 28, 56-4
Mistri, 59, 87
Mistri Vala Hira, 81
Mixed Hindu style, 87
Mizrab, 76-2
Mochanga, 55
Models, brass, 92-1
  clay, 56-2, 68-1, 76-1, 78, 92-1
  pith, 108
  silver (elephant), 126
  stone, 56-1, 76-1, 92-1, 126
  wood, 127
Moghal architecture, 101
Mogul Jan, 92
Mokhabba, 2, 76-5
Mokunda Cheepee, 92
Monghyr, 68-2, 68-3, 68-4
Montgomery, 104
Monuments of Central India, 123
Moradabad ware, 2, 38, 56-2, 96
Mosaic, 18, 56-4, 61, 76, 78, 95
  pottery, 38
Moss stones, 81
Moti Musjid, 17
Moulmein, 52
Mount Abu, 16
Mozuffarpur, 68-1, 68-4
Mridanga, 68-2
Muchanga, 68-2
Muhammad Ali, 44
Muhammad Ali Beg, 44
Muhammad Azim, 65

Muhammad Sharif, 76-7
Muhammadan work, 30, 31
Mukharji (T. M.), 41, 107
Mukundlal Kishandas, 129
Mulama (gilt), 127
Mulchandabhai (Mr.), 80
Mulchandbhai Hathising, 55
Multan, 50, 76-5, 76-6, 104, 106, 118
 enamel, 6, 9, 13, 25, 76-3, 76-7
 potters, 1
 pottery, 65, 76-7
Munnalall, 92
Mural decoration—
 glazed bricks and tiles, Gaur, 94
 Jalandhar, 38, 76-7
 Multan, 65, 76-7
 Kalaga panels, Burma, 69, 102
 lacquered panels, 46
 marble, Agra, 16, 17, 61, 95
 metal Sikh work, Amritsar, 4
 mica, Jeypore, 92-2
 painting, fresco, Amritsar, 76-1
 Delhi, 76-1
 Jeypore, 92-2
 distemper, Amritsar, 76-1
 Delhi, 76-1
 Lahore, 76-1
 on wood, Amritsar, 76-1
 Bikanir, 87
 Delhi, 76-1
 Lahore, 76-1
 printed hangings, Montgomery, 104
 shish, mirror enriched plaster, 4
 Jeypore, 92-2
 Ulwar, 91
 stone, relief, Ajmere, 16
 Baroli, 16
 Bhuvaneswar, 93
 Champavati, 16
 Chitore, 16
 Delhi, 17
 Fatehpore-Sikri, 17
 Gwalior, 18
 Hareshunath, 16, 17
 Rajputana, 16
 tracery, Agra, 56-2, 61, 95
 Ahmedabad, 16
 Ajmere, 16
 Bhavnagar, 80
 Bikanir, 16
 Bulandshahr, 24
 Dewalwara, 16
 Gwalior, 89
 jhali, 18, 92-1, 96
 Jeypore, 16, 92-1
 Jeysulmer, 16
 Jodhpur, 16
 Kerauli, 16
 Ulwar, 16
 stucco, Ajmere, 87, 92-1, 92-2
 terra-cotta reliefs, Kantanagar, 93
 wood, 30, 31
Murshedabad, 41, 52, 68-3, 68-4, 98, 107
Museum, Indian, fire at, 56
Museums as sample rooms, Preface 3
Mushu, 86
Musical instruments, 55, 56-2, 68-2, 76-2, 80, 81
Musnads, 76
Mutti, 2
Muttra, 23, 56-3, 95
Muzaffargarh, 76-1, 76-8
Mysore, 103, 107, 108
 screen, 78, 103
Mythological figures, 3

N.

Nabh Chand, 13
Nagára, 3
Nagina, 29
Nagpur, 102
Nahabut, 55
Najibabad, 56-3
Nakar Khana, 86
Nandi, 3, 121
Nand Kishor, 14, 92-3
Nangaon, 17
Nari, 19
Nārnol, 17
Nat-singha, 3
Navanagar, 122
Nawalgarh, 92-2
Nawashahr, 76-1
Nechaband, 3
Necklets, 4, 11, 12, 13, 56-2, 68-4, 76-6, 92-4, 106, 107, 126
Nepal screen, 78, 95
Newar art, 78, 95
Niello, tinned, 8, 76-3
 silver, 15
Nizamabad, 76-5
North Arcot, 52
North-Western Provinces, Art industries, 56-1
Nossam, 108
Nummulitic limestones, 16, 18
Nurpur, 9
Nusser Ahmud, 92

O.

Objects of collections (Museums) Preface 1
Odhanis (shawls), 128, 130
Oodeypore, 18, 19
Ornament, Burmese, 52, 102
 carved hornblende, 94
 Persian, 12
 surface, 16
 tinsel, 68-3
Ornaments of native women, 76-2
 Turkoman, 53
Ornamental bricks, 68-2
Ornamentation, rustic, 32, 44

P.

Padra, 130
Pagoda architecture, 79
Painted shields, 92-4
Paintings, 80, 99
 Cutch, 80
 Jeypore, 68-1, 92-1
 Jhang, 76-1
 Kangra, 76-1
 Karpurthala, 76-1
 Lahore, 76-1
 Nawashahr, 76-1
 Surat, 127
 on cloth, Puri, 68-1
 on gold-beaters' skin, Jeypore, 92-1
 illustrated manuscripts, Agra, 56-1
 Jeypore, 92-1
 Lucknow, 56-1
 Rampur, 56-1
 on ivory, Benares, 56-1
 Delhi, 68-1, 76-1
 Jeypore, 92-1
 kamagri on wood, Delhi, 76-2
 Jalandhar, 76-2
 Lahore, 76-2
 Muzaffargarh, 76-2
 by *Patuas*, 68-1
 portrait, Bombay, 99
 Calcutta, 68-1
Pakpattan, 76-6, 106
Palampore, 104
Palang-posh, 104, 130
Palee, 50
Palghat, 108
Palm-leaf fans, 108
Pándán, 2, 41, 56-2, 76-5, 106
Panels, door, brass, 4
 lacquered, 46
Panipat, 5, 76-3
Panna Lal, 14
Paper-weights (animal shaped, 126
Papier-mache, 93
 Bijnor, 56-4
 Cuddapah, 108
 Jaunpur, 56-4
 Jeypore, 92-4
 Karnul, 107, 108
 Kashmir, 76-2
 Mandawar, 56-4
 Rampur, 56-4
 Tanjore, 108
Parát, 2, 76-5
Parcel gilt, 14
Parowlá, 32
Parsis, 130, 131
Parrot design, 121
Patan, 95
Patiala, 76-6
Patila, 2
Patna, 68-2, 68-3, 68-4, 98
Patolo weaving, 117, 120, 131
Pattan, 128, 130, 132
 pottery, 126
Patuas, 68-1
Pavement, decoration, 18
 mosaic, 18
Peacock quill work, 76-8, 126
Pegu, 117
Pen-cases, 4, 15
Persian influence, 118, 131
 ornament, 12. 89, 104
 porcelain, 1
Pertabgarh, 9, 13
Peshawar, 8, 76-3, 76-4, 76-7, 76-8, 106, 117, 119
 frontier, glazed earthenware, 1, 106
 lac cloths, 76-1
Peshkabz, 76-5, 92-4
Petharam Brahmin, 92
Phagwara, 7, 76-4
Phain, 36
Phallus, 121
Phúl, 6
Phulkari, 120
Pigeon-house, Baroda, 80, 128
Pikdan, 2, 41
Pilibhit, 56-3
Pillared hall, 16
Pind Dadan Khan, 7, 76-4, 76-7, 76-8
Pineapple design, 120
Pingal-puran, 129
Pinjra work, 30, 31, 101, 102
Pirawah, 14
Pir Bakhsh, 76-1
Píri, 38
Pirthi, 14
Pital, 7
Pitambars, 34
Pitara, 35
Pitawas, 19
Pith models, 108
Pitlad, 128, 130
Plaster busts, 81
 of Paris, 93
 work, 92-2
Plate, gold and silver, 14
 Amritsar, 76-3
 Bahawalpur, 2
 Baroda, 131
 Bikanir, 15
 Burmese, 69
 Cuttack, 68-3
 Dacca, 68-3

Plate, gold and silver (*contd.*)
Darbhanga, 68-3
Delhi, 76-3
Jeypore, 15, 92-2, 92-3
Jalandhar, 76-3
Kapurthala, 76-3
Lahore, 76-3
Lucknow, 56-3
Ranchi, 68-3
Srinagar, 76-3
swami, 107
Tonk, 14
copper on silver, Tanjore, 107
silver niello, Jeypore, 15
Pointed arch, 16
Ponis, 76-5
Poona, 63, 81, 118
clay figures, 81
Popat-vela (creeper) design, 121
Porcelain, Indian, 76-7, 106
Portiéres, 104
Postins, 76-8
Pottery—
earthenware, biscuit, Chittagong, 68-4
Gudha, 92-4
Jeypore, 92-4
Murshedabad, 68-4
Mozuffarpur, 68-4
Puri, 1
Satkhera, 68-4
Sawan, 68-4
Sitamarhi, 68-4
adrak smeared, Jhajjar (Rhotak), 76-7
black and red, Bassi, 92-4
black painted red ware, Pind Dadan Khan, 76-7
black or slate with raised ornamentation, Aligarh, 56-4
heavy gilded, Saharanpur, 56-4
Kaghazi, Amroha, 56-4
Bahawalpur, 76-7
Gujranwala, 76-7
painted, Gonda, 56-4
Hoshiarpur, 76-7
glazed, Azimganj, 68-4
Barabanki, 56-4
Jeypore, 92-4
Jalandhar, 76-7
Kurja, 24, 56-4
Lahore, 76-7
Lucknow, 56-4
Madras, 65, 107, 108
Multan, 1, 65, 76-7, 106
Pattan, 132
Peshawar, 76-7, 106
Rampur, 56-4
Raniganj, 65, 68-4
Sewan, 68-4
Sind, 1
tiles, 38, 67, 76-7, 92-4, 106
black with floral pattern in silver leaf, Azamgarh, 56-4
perforated, Ulwar, 91
porcelain, 25
porcelaine tendre, Delhi, 76-7, 106
Prem Chand Mistri, 68-3
Presidency Committee, functions of, Preface 5
towns, Museums at, Preface 1, 6
Priests' cloth, 121
Primary colours, use of, 12
Prints, cotton, 104, 107, 108
silks, 117
Procter and Co., 55, 79
Provincial Committee, functions of, Preface 5
Provincial Museums, Preface 3
Pujas, 24
Pulak, 20
Pulpanadhan Thumby, 99
Punjab, 52, 107, 118
art industries, 76-1, 105
brass and copper work, 1
screen, 78, 101, 105
wood-carving, 29
Purdahs, 104
Puri (Orissa), 1, 68-1
Purneah, 41, 68-3, 98

R.

Rahat, 35
Rajmahal, 19, 92-4
Rajputana, 16, 47, 91, 91-2, 110
art industries, 92-1
court, 77, 78, 86
Rajshahi, 68-2, 68-3
Ram, 73
Ramalingham Asari, 133
Ramnad, 103
Rampur, 56-1, 56-2, 56-3, 56-4
Rāmpura, 14
Ram Singh, 101
Ranchi, 68-3
Rangoon, 52
Rangpur, 68-3
Raniganj, 65, 68-4
Ranjpur, 68-4
Ran-singha, 3, 76-2
Ras Mandala, 73
Rath, 5, 32, 126
Ratnagiri, 81
Ravi Vurma, 99
Raw products, Preface 6
Razm Namah, 89
Repoussé work, brass, 103, 132
Resolution, Government (Museums and Exhibitions), Preface 1
Rewa Kantha, 81
Rewari, 3, 4, 7, 76-4
Rezai (quilts), 104, 128, 130
Rhoda Bakhsh, 52
Rialo, 18, 92-4
Riebeck (Dr.), 48
Rifles, 56-3
Rikabis, 1, 2, 76-7
Roda, 35
Rugs, 32
Rumals, 130
Rupbat, 88
Rutlam, 9, 13, 89
Rutnagiri School of Industry, 54

S.

Sacha, 35
Sacrificial work, 3, 56-2, 68-3, 72, 92-3, 107, 108, 126, 132
Saddle bags, camel, 32
camel, 91
cloth, embroidered, 125
Saddlery, 76-8, 91
Sadis, 129, 130
Saharanpur, 56-2, 56-3, 56-4
Sakker-hauri, 68-2
Sakumba, 35
Salara, 19
Salig Ram, 17
Salvers, 56-2, 76-3, 92-3, 126, 131
Samples, Preface 6
Sanad, on brass plate, 6
Sanai, 68-3
Sanchi, 89, 110, 111, 123
Sandalwood work, 29, 51, 76-6, 81, 107, 108, 126, 131, 132
Sandstone, 18
red, 16, 18, 61, 88, 96
Sanganir, 129
Sangun, 103
Sangora, 19
Sani, 76-1
Sankheda lacquered ware, 133
Saracenic, 87, 105, 127
Sarangi, 55, 68-2, 76-2, 81
Saris, 120, 121, 122, 130
Sarna, 76-2
Sarota, 5, 76-5
Saru-ka-jhad (cypress tree), 127
Sarwár, 19
Sasseram, 68-2, 68-4
Satars, 81
Satin (see Silk)
Satkhira, 68-4
Savantwadi, 80
Sculpture, 16, 68-1, 111, 128
Seekur, 16, 17
Senhat, 68-3
Seths, 110
Seven Planets, 76
Sewan, 68-4
Shahabad, 76-2
Shah Alum (Mosque), 4
Shahdera, 65
Shahjahanpur, 56-3
Shahpur (Sahiwal), 76-6, 104
Shahpura (Rajputana), 47
Shahtan, 92
Shartan, 108
Shahlimar Gardens, Srinagar, 18
Shama-dán, 5
Sham Lal, 13
Shamsha, 86
Sham Singh, 10
Sharifud-din, 105
Shekhawati, 86, 87, 92-3
Shell ornaments, 68-4, 92-4, 108
Sheo Narayan, 17
Shields, 56-3, 76-3, 92-3, 92-4, 105, 126
lacquered, 47, 92-4
Shikarpur, 118
Shikhs, 4, 9, 29, 101
Shikh embossed copper work, 4
offering, 47
Shini, 2
Shish, 4, 91, 92-2
Shishadar phulkari, 47, 76-7
Shisham, 1, 3, 5, 31, 56-3, 76-2, 76-5, 76-6, 83, 87, 95, 101, 105
Shoes, 76-7
Shortt (Major-General A. Y.), 99
Sialkot, 76-3, 76-5, 105
Sidhpur, 128
Siekar, 92-2
Sitawats, 17, 92-1
Silk, Corah, 116, 118
Culture Court, 115
Muga, 117
tassar, 33, 115, 118
Silks, Ahmedabad, 118
Amritsar, 118
Assam, 78, 117
Azamgarh, 118
Berhampur, 117
Bijapur, 118
Bombay, 117
Cambay, 117
Cutch, 117, 118
Delhi, 117, 118
Indore, 117
Jhelum, 118
Kathiawar, 117
Lahore, 118
Madras, 118
Multan, 118
Pegu, 117
Peshawar, 117, 118

Silks, Poona, 118
Shikarpur, 118
Surat, 118, 131
Tanjore, 118
Tatta, 118
Thana, 33, 117, 118
Yeola, 117, 118
bandana, Navanagar, 112
Surat, 120
Ulwar, 119, 122
brocades, Bengal, 118
Surat, 120
brocatelle, 118
chanderi, 110
embroidered, Baroda, 126
Dacca, 117
Punjab, 118
white silk on net, Delhi, 120
phulkari, Amritsar, 120
sozni, Peshawar, 119
kinkhab, Ahmedabad, 82, 117, 121
Baroda, 117
Benares, 117, 118
Surat, 82, 117, 120, 131
mashru, 126, 131
Dacca, 117
Jeypore, 86
patolo, 117, 120, 131
Ahmedabad, 120
Baroda, 120
Broach, 120
Cambay, 120
Surat, 117, 120
printed, 117
sacred ribbon and cloth, Benares, 119, 121
satins, Ahmedabad, 117
Azimgarh, 117
Dhrangdhra, 117
Kathiawar, 117
Surat, 117
sangun, Aurangabad, 103
Silver niello, 15
plate (see Plate)
work, Burmese, 69
Silversmith, 27
Simla, 29, 76-2, 76-5, 76-8
Simpson (W. G.), 99
Sind, 1, 36, 89, 128, 129, 130
boxes, 45, 47
calico prints, 130
potters, 1
Singhana, 92-2, 92-3
Sirohi, 16
Sironj, 14
Sirsa, 76-8
Sital patti, 78, 102
Sitamarhi, 68-4
Sitar, 55, 68-2, 76-2
Sita Ram, 19
Siva, 73, 92-1, 119, 121
Sive Cooty Chundraya, 107
Slate, carving, 68-2
Soapstone, 18, 56-1, 81, 96
Sojitra, 128, 130
Sonar Tope, 110
Sookha Singh, 10
Sorabji Jamasji, 131, 132
Sozni, 119
Srinagar, 8, 76-3
Star design, 121
Steatite, 18
Stone carving (see Carving, stone)
screen work, 56-2, 61, 89, 92
Statues, 117
Stucco, 87, 92-1, 92-2
Stupas, 110
Subhana, 8
Sudhana, 8
Sultanpur, 56-3
Sunar, 10
Sundaris, 81
Superstitions, 118
Surahi, 2, 41, 56-2, 56-4, 76-5, 76-7, 91, 92-3, 106
Surapis, 41
Surat, 50, 80, 81, 82, 117, 120, 127, 128, 131
Surma-dán, 5, 14
Sursanga, 55
Swami jewelry, 107
Swords, 56-3, 68-3, 76-3, 76-4, 76-5
Sword handles, 126

T.

Tabla, 76-2
Tabalbaz, 2, 76-4
Taj Mahal, 16, 17, 61, 76, 95
Takh posh, 31, 38, 76-6
Talc, 68-2, 108
paintings on, 56-1
Tali, 4
Taliyar, 76-3
Tambura, 68-2, 76-2, 81
Tanjore, 43, 107, 108, 118
copper and silver work, 107
Tarakeswar, 68-1
Tara mandal design, 121
Tarbdár, 76-2
Tarkashi, 24, 56-3, 95
Tarsia work (see Inlaying in wood)
Tartar cloud and lotus, 10
Tashti, 3
Tashtri, 2
Tasi, 2
Tassar, 33, 116, 118
Tathera, 6
Tathyar, 6
Tatta, 118
Taus, 55, 76-2
Tawas, 76-5
Tazzia, 103
Teak, 78, 82, 88, 92-2, 102, 103, 119, 128
Teapoy covers, 126
Teapoys, 132
Tellery (S. J.), 19, 92-4
Temple (R. C.), 57, 113
Terra-cotta figures, 56-2, 76-1
reliefs in, 93
Textile fabrics, 111, 126, 128
Thal, 2, 76-4
Thale, 35
Thâli, 2
Thana cloth, 129
silks, 33, 117, 118
Thappas, 5
Thornton's Gazetteer, 100
"Tie-and-dye" work, 117, 119, 120, 122
Tikli, 68-4
Tiles, 38, 65, 76-7, 94, 106
Tilk, 53
Tinned copper niello, 8
Tinnevelly, 108
Tinsel ornaments, 68-3
Tipperah, 68-4
Tirkash, 76-2
Tirupati, 108
Tombi, 2, 76-5
Tonk, 14
Toon, 76-6
Tope, 124
Tortoise, 75
shell, 107
Toys, Benares, 45, 56-4
ivory, 50, 68-4
lac, 56-4, 68-2, 92-3, 108, 132, 133
stone, 76-6, 76-7
Tracery, 16, 17, 96
Travancore, 51, 107
Trays, 92-3, 107
Tree of life, 76, 103
Trellis-work, 18
Tripureswar, 95
Trisula, 73, 121
Tulsi Ram, 17
Tulsiram, 92
Tumurcha, 53
Tun tunas, 81
Turanian, 9, 10
Turbans, 122, 126, 130
Turbenella rapa, 81
Turkoman ornaments, 53
Turquoise, 96

U.

Udaipur, 52
Udoki, 101
Ugaldán, 2
Ujfalvi (M. E. de), 25
Ujjain, 89
Ula, 68-2
Ulwar, 9, 10, 14, 16, 91, 119, 122
H.H. the Mahrao Raja, 85
screen, 88
Umbrella, 74
Uniara, 92-4
Usrar, 68-2

V.

Vadnagar, 128
Vahán, 3
Vasu, 128
Vasu Ram, 13
Victoria, Her Most Gracious Majesty, 85
Vinas, 55, 81
Visangar, 132
Vishnu, 73, 92-1, 119, 129
Vishnu Pad, 75
Vizagapatam, 51, 107

W.

Wandiwash, 108
Warangal, 103
War clubs, 126
Wardle (T.), 115
Wazir Khan's Mosque, Lahore, 38
Weaving, figures, 118
Wimbridge (Mr.), 80, 82, 87
Wire inlaid in wood, 56-3, 95
Wood carving (see Carving, wood)
Carving Co., Ahmedabad, 17
engraving, 68-1
birch, 95
Bombay blackwood, 80, 83, 128
boxwood (Buxus sempervirens), 68-1
deodar (Cedrus deodara), 30, 76-2, 101, 102, 105
ebony (Diospyros tormentosa and melanoxyton), 56-3, 56-4, 68-4, 76-6, 108
gambhar (Glemina Arborea), 68-1
maple, 1
palm, 68-4
pine, 63
sandal (Cæsalpinia sappan), 29, 76-6, 108, 126, 131, 132
shisham (Dalbergia sissu), 1, 3, 5, 31, 56-3, 76-2, 76-5, 76-6, 83, 87, 95, 101, 105
tamarind, 68-1, 76-6
teak, 69, 78, 82, 88, 92-2, 102, 103, 119, 128
toon (Cedrela toona), 76-6
walnut, 76-5
Wristlets, 26

Wyliath Hosein, 92

Y.

Yagluk, 53
Yakdans, 76-8
Yeola, 35, 117, 118
Yerrowda Jail, 54
Yondapilly Veerasalingam, 107

Z.

Zang, 4
Zarbuland, 43, 98
Zorawar Singh, 10

ILLUSTRATIONS.

A.

Abkhora, silver, Jeypore, 20
Aftab, Peshawar, 8
Ahmedabad, carving, 20, 84
kinkhab, 124
Ambala, Sadar Bazar, 64
Amritsar, *phulkari*, 124
Arcade, Khurja, 28
Architecture as understood by native gentry, 28
P.W. Department, 28
Atrdán, silver, 20

B.

Bandana work, Ulwar, 124
Baroda, the Maharaja of, 133
brass repoussé, 133
brocade, 133
patolo, 133
pigeon house, 133
printed *sadi*, 133
sandalwood, 133
satin, 133
silver tray, 133
Bathing ghat, Bulandshahr, 28
Bidri ware, 48, 100, 114
worker, 48
Borah Bazar Street, Bombay, 84
Bracket, *pinjra* work, 32
Brass and copper ware, 8
Buffalo horn inlaid with ivory, 20
Burmese silver work, 76

C.

Camel saddle, Jodhpur, 92
Carved blackwood, Ahmedabad, 84
doors inlaid with brass wire, Lucknow, 100
sandalwood cabinet, Mysore, 114
wood panels, Ahmedabad, 20
Chaunki, Punjab, 32
Colonial and Indian Exhibition, 84, 92, 100, 114, 124, 133
Copper *chambu*, Benares, 76
Cotton prints, Punjab, 114

D.

Dacca, filigree casket, 100
Damascened tray, Sialkot, 114
Delhi, embroidery, 124
mantel-piece border, 114
Door, Bhera, 32
Lahore City, 32

E.

Embossed copper, Sikh work, 8
Embroidered *sozni*, Peshawar, 124
Embroidery, Delhi, 124
Enamels, 20, 92
Engraved plate, Jeypore, 92

F.

Filigree casket, Dacca, 100
Furniture, Anglo-Indian, 32

G.

Gateway, Chapravat House, Bulandshahr, 28
Gulasthi House, Bulandshahr, 28

H.

Hindu brass vessels, 8
Horn and ivory casket, Vizagapatam, 114
Hoshiarpur, table tops, 114
Hukka, *bidri* ware, Lucknow, 32
brass and leather, 8
Hyderabad, *bidri* ware, 114

I.

Inkstand and pen case, silver, 20
Inlaid brass panels, Jhang, 114
Ivory and bison horn, Vizagapatam, 56
carving, Benares, 56
Bombay, 56
Burmese, 56
Central India, 56
Murshedabad, 56
North Arcot, 56
Punjab, 56
Travancore, 56
Udaipur, 56
inlay, Mysore, 114

J.

Jehangirabad House, Bulandshahr, 28
Jeypore, enamel, 20, 92
Maharaja of, 100

K.

Kanon, 114
Kashmir, brass and copper teapots, 8
chased copper ware, 8
tinned copper niello, 8
Khurja Market Place, 28
Kinkhab, 84
Ahmedabad, 124
Surat, 124

L.

Lacquered plate, Sankheda, 133
Lamps, brass, 8
Lucknow, *bidri* ware, 48, 100

M.

Marble, carvings, Jeypore, 20
inlaid, Agra, 100
Market Place, Bulandshahr, 28
Moradabad, shield, 100
Multan, pottery, 68
silver enamel, 20
Murshedabad, *bidri* ware, 100
Mysore, carved sandalwood cabinet, 114
ivory inlay, 114
picture frame, 114

P.

Patolo, Baroda, 133
Pattan pottery, 133
Pertabgarh, quasi-enamel, 20
Peshawar, *sozni*, 124
Phulkari, Amritsar, 124
Picture frame, Mysore, 114
Pinjra work, Punjab, 32
Plates, *bidri* ware, Lucknow, 32
Pottery, Pattan, 133
Ulwar, 92
Purneah, *bidri* ware, 100

R.

Razm Namah, illustration from, 92
Rustic ornament, Punjab, 28, 32

S.

Sacerdotal cloth, 124
Salver, silver, 20
Sandalwood, Baroda, 133
Sandalwood and ivory casket, Vizagapatam, 114
Sankheda, lacquered plate, 133
Sari, Surat, 124
Ulwar, 124
Screen, Agra, 100
Baroda, 133
Bengal, 100
Bikanir, 92
Bombay, 84
Burma, 114
Central India, 92
Central Provinces, 114
Gwalior, 92
Hyderabad, 114
Jeypore, 92
Kashmir, 114
Muttra, 100
Nepal, 100
Punjab, 114
Shield, Moradabad, 100
Sialkot, damascened tray, 114
Sikh work, embossed copper, 8
Silver plate, 20
Soapstone, carved, Agra, 100
Sozni, Peshawar, 124
Staff, Maharaja of Jeypore, 20
Surahi, *bidri* ware, Lucknow, 32
Surat, *kinkhabs*, 124
sari, 124

T.

Table-tops, Hoshiarpur, 114
Taj Mahal, Agra, 64, 76
Tray, Baroda, 133
Moradabad, 100
Turban, Ulwar, 124
Turkoman ornaments, 56

U.

Ulwar, *Bandana* work, 124
Maharao Raja, 100
sari, 124
turban, 124

V.

Vase, hammered copper, Bombay, 84
Victoria, Her Most Gracious Majesty, 100
Vizagapatam, horn and ivory casket, 114
sandalwood and ivory casket, 114

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